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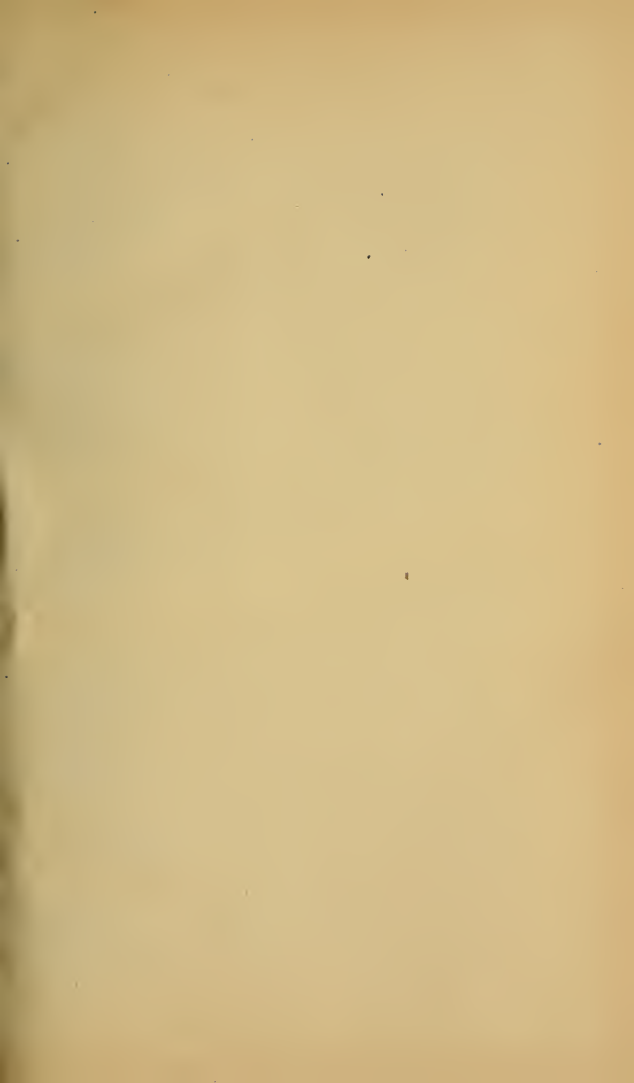
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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

PASSION

OF OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

BY

3050.C^L

BROTHER PHILIP,

SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

Bransiet, Philippe

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PREFACE.

MEDITATION is the first of religious exercises ; but amongst the different subjects for meditation, are not those which relate to the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ the first ?

Meditation, as St. Francis de Sales expresses it, has always for its object the love of God and the practice of virtue, and it is so much the more useful in as far as it leads efficaciously thereto. But how great, then, is the utility of meditations on the sufferings and death of Jesus ? What can there be more calculated to excite in our hearts love and gratitude to God ? What more proper to maintain, develop, and strengthen, the spirit of piety, the courage of sacrifice, the will to belong to God and that for ever ?

Yes, there is there an abundant source of most precious graces, the principle of a supernatural strength which renders the Christian patient and resigned in adversity, firm in the combat with the enemies of salvation, courageous against self.

All the Saints have experienced this ; and they teach with St. Bonaventure that “ pious meditation on the

Passion of Jesus Christ delivers the Christian from all evil, draws down upon him all sorts of favors, procures for him the grace of God in this life, and the immortal pledge of his glory in the other."

We have, therefore, some reason to think that we would be useful to our Brothers in presenting them with a series of subjects for meditation on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Each subject comprises three parts : the *consideration*, or contemplation of the mystery ; the *application*, or practical consequences which are most directly derived from it ; and the *prayer*.

We have chosen a sufficient number of subjects to have one for each Friday of the year, and some others over and above, for the two last weeks of Lent, during which we are specially bound, according to the spirit of the Church, to meditate on the sufferings and death of Our Lord.

In order that meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ may produce its fruits, it is requisite, besides the preparation :—1st, that the subject be read slowly and distinctly ; 2d, that while meditating, we do not lose sight of the greatness of him who suffers, for whom he suffers, what he suffers, and how he suffers ; 3d, that each one regard the Passion as having been suffered specially for himself, as Jesus Christ would have done even for one single man all that he did for entire humanity.

The sentiments which are the most in accordance with the subjects on which we meditate, and which we have, consequently, reproduced the oftenest, are :— admiration, love, gratitude to Our Lord, and contrition for our faults. It seems to us that there is less need of varying affections, than of exciting strongly within us those which are fundamental and may lead us most effectually to the practice of good.

As far as possible we keep to the subject in hand, we fix our eyes on Jesus suffering or dying for us, and we turn them not away : we merely point out, in the form of exhortation, the immediate practical consequences which are the spirit of the mystery we have been contemplating.

We have proposed to ourselves to speak much more to the heart than to the mind ; it seemed to us more advantageous to trace touching pictures adapted to captivate the imagination : such are the principles that have guided us in the compiling of this little work.

May these meditations produce some good, keep alive in souls the spirit of prayer, and make us love our adorable Savior more and more ! Then we shall bless him for having inspired us to prepare them, and we shall be happy in having contributed in some measure to make him known, loved, and glorified !

BROTHER PHILIP.

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MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

FIRST MEDITATION.

THE PASSION IN GENERAL.

“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man.”—St. Luke, xviii. 31.

CONSIDERATION.

IN imitation of all the saints, let us make it our principal occupation to recall, and to meditate upon, the passion of Jesus Christ; that divine Savior wishes it, the church exhorts us to it in a thousand ways,—this exercise is besides most fruitful in grace.

Jesus Christ invites all men to nourish their mind and their heart with the memories of his passion. Thus he would have it prefigured and foretold, in order that all the natives of the old law might contemplate, in the future, the august sacrifice by which they were to be redeemed, and of which all the others were but prophetic symbols.

He himself announces to his apostles, and to all the

Jewish people, that he is to suffer : “as Moses,” said he, “lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”* “He must suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation.”† “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man; for he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death.”‡

Yes, he wishes us to remember him, and what he suffered. He, moreover, manifests it to us by his Church. What does not that tender mother do to remind us of the sorrow, the ignominy he endured for us! She celebrates unceasingly the sacrifice of the altar, which is the continuation of that of Calvary; she gives the figure of the cross as a distinctive mark to her children; she places everywhere before their eyes the image of Christ crucified, and wishes it to be in all their dwellings. By her saints, by her devotions, by her ministers, she speaks, as it were, incessantly of the sorrows of her divine Sponse.

Let us answer her intentions. Ah! should not we Religious meditate especially on the Savior's Passion? All in the life we have embraced, speaks to us of Jesus suffering; this image is constantly before our eyes; we have in hand, and even carry always about us, the sacred book which contains the recital of his sorrows.

Let us place ourselves, then, before this subject so supremely important and so rich in fruits of salvation;

* St. John, iii. 14. † St. Luke, xvii. 25. ‡ *Ibid.*, xviii., 31-33.

and regarding the Passion in a general manner, ask who he is that suffers, why and from whom he suffers?

He who suffers, is the Son of God made Man, God himself. Ah! what a mystery; and how can we recall it without being seized with astonishment and filled with adoration? The Eternal, the King of heaven, descends into the very abyss of annihilation; he whom angels adore, is the butt of mockery and derision; the Holy of Holies, the Author of life, endures every suffering, and death itself; the Incarnate Lord, substituting himself for us miserable sinners, has taken in his hand the chalice presented by divine justice, and he drinks it to the dregs.

Oh, how bitter is that chalice! By what woes our divine Savior satisfies for us!

He suffers in his soul a mortal sadness, fear, weariness, grief, desolation, dejection, shame, confusion, all manner of anguish.

He suffers in his body unheard-of pains. He is tightly bound—he is brutally dragged along—he is slapped and buffeted—he is given up to the tortures of a horrible scourging which tears his members and makes his flesh fly in tatters; then come the crowning with thorns—the carrying of the cross—the crucifixion—the elevation of the cross—the three hours' agony on that altar of his sacrifice.

He suffers from all sorts of persons: his people disown him and demand his death: one of his apostles betrays him, another denies him, all desert him. For him, no pity, no compassion. Earth and hell are leagued against him. Heaven seems to abandon him, as he expresses

it in these words : " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " *

It is, therefore, overwhelmed with innumerable pains and unheard-of sorrows that he presents himself to our contemplation.

And now let us ask why he suffers so many ills, and seek the reason thereof in his divine heart which breathes only the glory of God his Father, and which is consumed with love for us.

Jesus Christ suffers to glorify his heavenly Father and accomplish his will. " Sacrifice and oblation," says he, " thou didst not desire ; then I said : ' Behold, I come that I should do thy will.' " † When about to give himself up to his enemies, he tells his apostles : " But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go hence ! " ‡

Jesus suffers in order to satisfy for the sins of all men : " He hath delivered himself for us," says St. Paul, " an oblation and a sacrifice to God, for an odor of sweetness : " § " In him, we find, through his blood, the remission of sins : " || David had said of the Savior : " With the Lord there is mercy, and with him plentiful redemption : and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. " ¶

Jesus Christ suffers that we may in return love him with all the love of which we are capable ; and it is for this reason that, even though one tear of his would have sufficed for the expiation of all the sins of men, he was

* St. Matt. xxvii. 46. † Ps. xxxix. 7-9. ‡ St. John, xiv. 31.

§ Eph. v. 2. || Col. i. 14. ¶ Ps. cxxix. 7, 8.

pleased to endure all sorts of pain and to die a most cruel death.

Jesus suffers to cure men of the wounds made by sin, and to restore us to our former state. Our fall was occasioned by pride and disobedience; our restoration can only be effected by our voluntary abasement and our entire submission to God. Now, it is to conduct us in this way of salvation that our Lord humbles himself so far that he can say: "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people :"* and that after having assumed the form of a slave, "he humbles himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." †

He suffers to teach us patience, forgiveness of injuries, devotedness even to our enemies; he suffers to give us a perfect example of all virtues, and to excite us to walk courageously in his footsteps; he suffers to make us understand the great evil of sin, the cost of grace, the value of our soul.

APPLICATION.

Do we with our whole heart love Jesus, the divine victim of our redemption, who sacrifices himself for our sake?

The Son of God manifests himself to us torn with blows, crowned with thorns, bleeding, fastened to a cross, his eyes filled with tears; and, in this state, he says to us: "My son, give me thy heart!" ‡ Could we refuse it to him?

With the saints, let us compassionate his sufferings;

* Ps. xxi. 7.

† Phil., ii. 8.

‡ Prov., xxiii. 26.

let us make his pains our own ; let us weep over him ; but, at the same time, let us, as he exhorts us to do, weep over our own sins which are the true cause of his Passion.

Let us profit by the fruits of salvation which he procured for us by his sacrifice ; let us labor to apply to ourselves his infinite merits. Let this be our whole ambition : the graces which flow from the cross, purify, console, strengthen, the soul, and prepare it to go to heaven to celebrate the eternal nuptials of the Lamb, who has secured that privilege for us by the shedding of his blood.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, who hast suffered so much for the love of us, deign, I beseech thee, to enlighten my mind and touch my heart, to the end that, in the contemplation of thy griefs, I may comprehend, with all thy saints, the length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of thy charity, and that my soul may pour itself forth in tears of love, of gratitude, and of repentance !

O victim of my salvation, grant, by thy grace, that I may be united with thee in thy sufferings, to the end that I may be united with thee in thy glory ! Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 382.)

SECOND MEDITATION.

JESUS REPAIRS FROM THE SUPPER-ROOM TO
THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

“Jesus went forth with his disciples, over the brook Cedron.”
—St. John, xviii. 1.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our adorable Savior at the moment when he has celebrated the Last Supper with his apostles. He has immolated and eaten with them the last figurative paschal lamb; he has established the sacrifice of the altar, and said, presenting to his apostles the consecrated bread and wine: “This is my body which shall be delivered for you:”* “This is my blood which shall be shed for you.”†

And now the hour is come when the true paschal lamb is to be immolated, when the sacrifice of the cross is to be accomplished;—that sacrifice of which that of the altar shall be commemorative, and the continuation, when that adorable body which is the host of our salvation is to be given up, and that divine blood shed, by which alone the remission of sins can be obtained.

The night commenced is that on which Jesus Christ is going to leave the powers of darkness full liberty. His enemies are on the watch and desirous of seizing

* 1 Cor. xi. 24.

† St. Matt. xxvi. 28.

him ; the infamous Judas is with them, awaiting the favorable moment for giving him up to them.

But let us turn our eyes from the traitor. Let us behold the eleven faithful apostles, penetrated with the liveliest emotion on account of the supper of the New Law, of which they have partaken, and pressing around their divine Master. With what respect, what love, what piety, they hear the words of life and of charity which fall from his divine lips !

“What is written,” said he, “must be fulfilled in me : ‘He was reputed with the wicked ;’* for what concerns me relates to its accomplishment. Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In my Father’s house there are many mansions ; I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be.

“If you love me, keep my commandments ; and I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another paraelete, the Spirit of Truth. I will not leave you orphans ; I will come to you. The world seeth me no more ; but you see me.

“My peace I give to you. I go away, and I come again to you. For the prince of the world cometh. And in me he hath not anything ; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment so I do. Arise, let us go hencee.” †

After these words, he journeys towards the brook Cedron, which separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives ; and continuing to instruct his apostles, he says

* Isa. liii. 12.

+ St. John, xiv.

to them: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do the things that I command you. These things I command you, that you love one another."*

He tells them again that he is going to leave them, but that he will send them the Comforter, who shall teach them all truth; he exhorts them to pray, assuring them that whatsoever they ask in his name, his Father will give them; he announces to them that they shall have much to suffer in the world: "But have confidence," he adds, "I have overcome the world."†

Then he prays for them and for all those who shall believe in their word. Raising his eyes to heaven, he says: "Father, I pray for them whom thou hast given me. Keep them in thy name, that they may be one as we also are one. Preserve them from evil. Sanctify them in truth. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me, that they may see my glory which thou hast given me. I have made known thy name to them, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."‡

His prayer finished, he leaves the place where he was, and goes forth from Jerusalem. Then, and by that very going forth, commences the execution of the decree of reprobation pronounced against that ungrateful city, which is soon to be deicidal. She has not

* St. John, xv.

† St. John, xvi. 33.

‡ St. John, xvii.

availed herself of the days that might procure for her peace, and now these days of mercy are past.

Jesus arrives at the Valley of Jehoshaphat. As prefigured by David flying from the parricide Absalom, he crosses the torrent of Cedron, his soul overwhelmed with sadness. Let us contemplate him dejected, desolate; but let us remember that he will one day come again in power and in glory in that same valley, where all men shall then be gathered together.

Nevertheless, Jesus approaches the garden which is to be the first scene of his sorrows. But, as he has to sustain alone the coming contest, he first separates himself from eight of his apostles, then from the three others.

Oh! how sensibly his tender heart feels this separation! And his disciples, too,—with what sorrowful emotion they behold him going away from them, entering the garden, and disappearing amongst the trees!

At length the journey from the supper-room to the Garden of Olives is ended. Jesus is about to commence his Passion on the very mountain from which he is to ascend into heaven, teaching us thereby that it is by trials and troubles we are to gain eternal bliss; that we must, like him, pass through the garden of sorrow and through Calvary before arriving at the glory of the Ascension.

Jesus is about to commence his passion in a garden, and, by that circumstance, he reveals to us that he came to repair the evil which began in a garden, and which was caused by the disobedience of the first man; he announces to us that he advances to disarm the cherub

placed by divine justice at the gate of the true paradise, and to take from his hands the flaming sword which debars us from entering in.

Ah ! let us think of the difference that exists between the garden wherein the first man was placed, and that in which we contemplate the new man.

There, Adam enjoyed all sorts of delights ; here, Jesus is going to suffer in his soul all manner of woes.

There, the first sin was committed, and, consequently, innumerable evils overspread the earth ; here, sin is repaired, and hence flow such infinite graces that the Church can exclaim : “ O happy transgression which procured for us such a Redeemer ! ”

There, Death was born of pride and pleasure ; here, Jesus by his sufferings and his humiliation, causes us to be born again to a new life.

There, was the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which has been the origin of all wars and of all disorders ; here, is the olive, the symbol of the peace which Jesus has procured for us by his sweat and his blood.

APPLICATION.

How fruitful in salutary teachings is the subject on which we meditate !

It makes us understand the misfortune of the soul which, like Judas, is the slave of a passion, and separates itself from its divine Master ; or which, like Jerusalem, knows not the day when that adorable Savior visits it by his grace !

It admirably instructs us in the love, the tenderness, the generosity, of Jesus Christ for us. It makes us

contemplate, as it were unveiled, his heart consumed with the flames of charity.

Oh ! could we but conceive the love of that divine Savior for us, who, after having given himself to us in his sacrament, substituted himself in our place to suffer the penalty of our sins.

He has said : " Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends : " * now this proof he has given us, and that too when we were his enemies.

Why, then, should we not love him with our whole heart ? Why not manifest to him by all our thoughts, by all our affections, by all our works, the liveliest and most constant gratitude, since that gratitude, how great soever it may be, will never be commensurate with what he has done for us.

PRAYER.

I adore thee, O Jesus ! beginning thy dolorous Passion. I have accompanied thee from the supper-room to the Mount of Olives, listening, with thy apostles, to the words of life and of charity which proceed from thine adorable mouth. Oh ! grant by thy grace, that they may be the rule of my life, to the end that having faithfully accomplished thy holy will, I may deserve to be placed on thy right hand, when thou shalt come, glorious and triumphant, to judge the nations in the same Valley of Jehoshaphat, which has witnessed thy humiliations !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 382.)

* St. John, xv. 13.

THIRD MEDITATION.

SADNESS OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

“My soul is sorrowful, even unto death.”—St. Matt., xxvi. 38.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us adore our Divine Savior entering into the Garden of Olives, with Peter, James, and John, the three disciples whom he wishes to make more particularly the witnesses of the piteous state to which he is reduced.

He experiences fear, sadness, and great affliction which he expresses in these words: “My soul is sorrowful, even unto death.”*

Wishing to prepare for his passion by prayer, he tells the disciples who accompany him to watch and pray; then he goes some paces away from them.

Contemplate him in the state in which the holy Evangelist describes him: he is overcome with fear and trouble; he suffers the greatest interior pains, the most overwhelming sadness, the most fearful anxiety; he feels in his divine heart the incomprehensible sorrows whereof the prophet-king speaks when he exclaimed by divine inspiration: “My heart is troubled within me, and darkness hath covered me.”†

See, O my soul! thy divine Savior sinking under the weight of his sorrows; he is become pale, weak, trem-

* St. Matt., xxvi. 38.

† Ps. liv. 5, 6.

bling ; his heart is oppressed with anguish, his eyes are full of tears. his soul is plunged in the bitterest grief. Hear the groans of thy beloved, and abandon thyself to sentiments of the liveliest compassion.

O Jesus, how profound is thy sorrow ! but how mysterious, how astounding it also is ! It is only a few moments since, showing thy desire to suffer and to die for us, thou saidst : “ I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished ! ” * And behold all at once thou showest thyself timid, dismayed, overcome with weariness, and revealest to us that thy soul is sorrowful even unto death.

Why, then, O Lord ! art thou, the joy and the delight of the angels, ingulfed in afflictions ? Wherefore dost thou, the source of all strength, appear weakness itself ? Wherefore does he who is to be the courage of martyrs, shudder at the sight of torments and the approach of death ?

Ah ! undoubtedly in all this there are sublime teachings, whereon we should meditate attentively.

The exhaustion that Jesus feels is extreme ; but it is, at the same time, voluntary. He produces it in his soul, in order to show us that he has truly taken our nature, and that, apart from sin, there is really in him what there is in us. He wills only what his Father wills : nevertheless, his submission, perfect as it is, diminishes not in him the feeling of horror, nor his repugnance for the torments and the ignominious death he is to undergo. At this moment, the Divinity, which is always in his

* St. Luke, xii. 50.

adorable person, leaves his sacred humanity, in some degree, to itself, in order that he may experience all our sorrows ; but at the same time it sustains it, that it may not give way before the moment he has himself appointed.

More than that, as remarks St. Lawrence Justinian, his divinity itself contributes to augment his sufferings, by giving his soul a perfect knowledge of all he has to endure.

This is, in fact, the first cause of his utter prostration. He considers the bitterness of the chalice presented to him by divine justice, which he must satisfy for us. He sees distinctly all he is to suffer ; he unrolls before his imagination the pictures of all the ignominy that awaits him, of all the horrible torments that are prepared for him. He represents to himself that every moment of that night and of the succeeding day, will bring him new opprobrium ; that he shall be the butt of all manner of insults, outraged in every possible way, left a prey to the most cruel tortures, even to the final moment when he shall expire after having said, “ All is consummated ! ”* Before the sight his heart quails, his courage seems to abandon him, and his soul is overcome with mortal fear.

But it is not only the sight of the torments prepared for him that affects our divine Savior ; it is still more the sight of the sins which he has taken upon himself, and that of the vast number of souls who will not profit by his sacrifice.

He is overwhelmed with sorrow, because he sees him-

* St. John, xix. 30.

self laden. before his Father, with the sins of all men. Oh! who will give us to know what shame, what confusion he feels when he considers himself in that state! He is the thrice holy God, and he appears guilty of all the sins that have been committed or shall be committed on earth during the lapse of ages! Hence, at this moment, he has nothing before his mind but what is sad and painful; he sees in the past an innumerable succession of crimes, from the disobedience of Adam till the sacrilege of Judas; the present bears heavily on his soul with the weight of the still greater crimes already resolved on by the chiefs of the Jewish nation; he perceives in the future the work of sin going on without interruption, and that in despite of the sacrifice of his life made to destroy it.

He is overwhelmed with sadness, because he considers the ingratitude and the misfortune of sinners who will refuse to profit by his sufferings and his death; who will despise the salvation he has purchased for them; who still persist in their iniquity, and shall die impenitent. It is for them, for their unhappy lot, that he sheds abundant tears. His heart is broken to think of how many Christians, members of his mystical body, who shall be snatched away from it by demons!

But there are other motives still which cause this interior sorrow of Jesus. "It is," says St. Ambrose, "in order to expiate our guilty joys, and merit for us the grace never again to give ourselves up to them." It is to sanctify our sorrow, to give us strength and courage to bear them, to soften them, and even sometimes to exempt us from them. It is that we may find in him a

remedy for our moral pains, a source of consolation in our dryness and discouragement. It is also in order to inspire us with the sorrow, the contrition we ought to have on account of our transgressions. Sins originate in the heart ; Jesus begins expiation for them by an interior sorrow, and thereby merits for all of us regret for those we have committed, and the grace to expiate them by a true repentance.

APPLICATION.

To enter into the spirit of this mystery of the sorrow of Jesus in the Garden of Olives, let us excite in our hearts the most lively gratitude to our generous Redeemer, and the most sincere repentance for our faults. Ah ! let us never forget that it is our sins that have overwhelmed his divine soul with grief, that it was on our account his face was covered with confusion, that it was at the sight of our malice his eyes were filled with tears. Let us then weep in his presence the misfortune we have had in offending him, and let our tears have their source in our heart, truly contrite and humble !

Let the thought of the sorrow of Jesus excite us also to patience and resignation in our interior troubles, and let it fortify us against the weariness and discouragement we might feel.

When we are afflicted, let us unite ourselves to Jesus suffering, and ask him, by the event of his divine sadness, the grace to bear with constancy and with generosity the trials to which he subjects us.

Let us purify our hearts from all irregular affection ;

let us reform the interior man within us on the model of Jesus Christ. Let us try to impress on ourselves the sadness of that divine Master, not allowing ourselves to go the length of a joy that is wholly worldly, but living in a modesty and a reserve that may manifest the compunction which ought to reign in our hearts.

PRAYER.

“O Lord Jesus Christ! eternal sweetness of those who love thee, remember the mournful sadness thou didst feel at the approach of thy passion, and by that sadness, O most sweet Jesus, have mercy, I beseech thee, on me a sinner!”*

Grant me that I may weep to my last hour the misfortune I have had in offending thee, and reward, by the generous practice of virtue, the unfaithfulness of which I am guilty, and which I will deplore to the end of my life.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 383.)

* Prayer of St. Gertrude.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

PRAYER OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

“ Father . . . take away this chalice from me.”—
St. Mark, xiv. 36.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate in the Garden of Olives our adorable Savior suffering in his divine soul the most overwhelming weariness, the most lively apprehension, the most profound sadness.

Ah ! who could measure the extent of his grief ? Let us hear him manifest it to his apostles by the astonishing words : “ My soul is sorrowful even unto death ! ”* His heart is desolate, and he feels the want of having recourse to his heavenly Father, to draw from prayer strength against the exhaustion into which he allows his sacred humanity to fall.

After having admonished the three apostles who accompany him, to watch and pray with him, he goes a stone's throw away from them, and there, falling prostrate on the ground, he says : “ Father ! all things are possible to thee ; take away this chalice from me ; but not as I will, but as thou wilt.”†

Ah ! who is it that is reduced to this state of desolation, and who prays with such earnest entreaty ? It is the Almighty, it is the well-beloved Son of God.

* St. Matt., xiv. 34.

† *Ibid.*, 36.

What a mystery, then, is that of his agonizing grief, and the sighs and moans in which he gives vent to it!

He considers himself charged with the sins of all men, and consequently indebted to his Father's justice for the penalty of that all but infinite number of faults and crimes of every kind.

Hence, the chalice which he asks to have taken away, is our sins, the burden of which he wants through love for us to take upon himself, but which is infinitely repugnant to his sanctity.

This chalice is all that he has to suffer in his grievous Passion; it is the deluge of afflictions that is to break over him, and which is to end in the most cruel and ignominious death; it is the profanation which his enemies are to make of his adorable person, which they will overwhelm with all manner of contempt; it is the deicide whereof the Jews are to become guilty, and which shall draw down upon them the numberless misfortunes that will be the ruin of their nation.

This chalice is, moreover, the abuse that will be made by men of the graces he is about to merit for them at the cost of so many sorrows; it is the loss of the great number of souls who will cast themselves into the abyss of hell, notwithstanding what he does to save them.

All this is present to his mind and breaks his heart. Hence he asks for its removal "by prayers and supplications, by a strong cry and tears."* Undoubtedly, O Jesus! it were just that thy Father should hear thy prayer. Innocence, or rather holiness itself, thou

* Heb., v. 7.

shouldst not be subjected to the sorrow and death which are the penalty of sin ; naturally, thy sacred humanity should neither suffer nor die. But if he hears thee, if thy chalice is removed from thee, what is to become of us?—of us who can only be saved on condition that thou wilt accept it, for thou alone canst be the victim of our redemption.

Oh ! let us have confidence : mercy prevails here over justice ; Jesus desires to be now and always our generous liberator ; so having said, “Father ! take away this chalice from me,” he immediately adds : “but not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Let us reflect on this second part of his prayer: —

“Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”—Thus Jesus commences his Passion by the self-denial of which he had given the precept when he said: “If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me !” * He gives up his human will, although most holy, and compels it to accept torments without number, and an infamous death from which it would naturally have shrunk.

“Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt :” I submit to thy decrees. “Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require : then said I, ‘Behold, I come ; in the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will.’” † Yes, O Father ! to repair the disobedience of man, I make myself obedient even unto death, and the death of the cross ; I accept the chalice which thou dost present to me ; I consent to be baptized with the

* St. Matt., xvi. 24.

† Ps. xxxix. 8, 9.

baptism wherewith I am to be baptized ; may thy holy will, not mine, be done !

O sublime obedience of Jesus ! By it he adores God in a manner worthy of him ; by it he repairs the disobedience of Adam and of each one of us ; by it he merits for us the grace to submit our own will, on all occasions, to the divine will ; to lead, in our holy state, the life of obedience to which we are called.

Thus it is that, in his prayer, our divine Savior reveals to us the admirable dispositions of his heart, and teaches us the renouncement of our own will, and perfect submission to that of God. Thus it is, again, that he instructs us by his example in the qualities which the prayer of Christians ought to have ; for he prays with humility, holding himself, as it were, annihilated in the presence of his Father ; with fervor, asking earnestly to be exempted from the sufferings of his Passion ; with resignation, asking it only with perfect submission to the will of God ; with constancy, repeating the same words and prolonging his prayer, although his soul is in a state of utter and extreme desolation, and that it appears to him as though God, his Father, had entirely forsaken him.

APPLICATION.

Let us compassionate the interior sorrow of Jesus ; let us take part in the grief that overwhelms him, and with him shed tears before God, his Father.

His sorrow is caused by sin ; and we, alas ! have committed it so many times, and with such aggravating circumstances ! Besides, we see it committed so fre-

quently, so universally : ah ! do we not feel in our heart, at that sight, a bitter pain, a profound desolation ?

With Jesus, let us weep over the misfortune of souls who profit not by the redemption he has purchased for them by his sufferings and death. Oh ! how deplorable is that misfortune !

Let us pray that the number of these souls may diminish : let us pray for the conversion of sinners ; let us pray that the merits of the Divine Redeemer may not be left unfruitful by reason of the malice or indifference of men.

In imitation of our divine Master, let us renounce our own will to submit ourselves in all things to that of God.

Let us be always heartily disposed to say : “ Our Father who art in heaven ! may thy holy will be done by me on earth, as it is done by thy holy angels in heaven, or rather as it was by thy divine Son who, to accomplish it, made himself obedient even unto death, and the death of the cross.”

Let us ask of Jesus Christ praying in the Garden of Olives, the spirit of prayer and the courage to accept the portion of the chalice which is presented to us, and by which we shall apply to ourselves the merits of his sacrifice.

PRAYER.

O most sweet Jesus ! who art come to seek and to save what had perished, I compassionate, from the depth of my heart, the desolation to which thou art reduced.

O beloved of my soul ! I wish to give myself entirely to thee ; and in order to testify to thee my love and my

gratitude, I offer thee my heart to suffer as much of the bitterness of thine as thou wilt deem fitting for me to bear.

But deign, I beseech thee, to aid me with thy grace, so that my courage may not fail; for alas! I am weakness itself, and at sight of the obstacles which present themselves, I can only exclaim: "Father! take this chalice away from me." Grant therefore, I beseech thee, that I may be able to add, after thy example, and in all my trials. "Father, not my will be done, but thine!"

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 383.)

FIFTH MEDITATION.

JESUS SWEATS BLOOD AND WATER.

“Being in an agony, he prayed the longer, and his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.”—
St. Luke, xxii. 43, 44.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate in the Garden of Olives, our divine Savior prolonging his prayer. Let us behold him, overwhelmed with sadness, and recall the principal causes of the state of desolation to which he is reduced.

He considers the sufferings that await him. He has before his mind the chains that shall bind his hands, the lashes that shall tear his members, the thorns that shall pierce his head; the nails, the cross, the spear,—all the instruments of his torture.

He measures how deep a wound his sufferings shall make in the heart of his most holy Mother.

He counts all the woes wherewith Jerusalem shall be overwhelmed in punishment of the deicide she is about to commit.

Having taken our iniquities upon him, he sees himself, as it were, all defiled with all the crimes of mankind. Oh! what a subject of confusion for his most holy soul, which perfectly comprehends how hideous, how hateful, how revolting sin is.

"O men! who conceive not what injury sin doth to God," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "come, hasten to behold Christ, the anointed of the Lord, the Son of God, God himself, prostrate in the dust. What is it that has reduced him to that state?—Sin, and even the mere image of sin. . . . Oh! it is that he has seen to what a degree sin offends God, and degrades man; and how it was necessary for him to carry satisfaction in order to appease the one and reinstate the other."

St. Paul says: "Him who knew no sin, he hath made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in him!"* The adorable Savior regards with a voluntary shudder all the rigor of divine justice provoked by the iniquities of men, and to be executed wholly on him as the substitute of sinners.

Above all, he considers the number, alas! so great, of those who will trample on his blood, and for whom his sufferings and death shall be the cause of a terrible condemnation. Oh, how the sight of those wretches afflicts his divine heart! How urgently he beseeches his Father to remove this chalice from him, to grant, if it be possible, that all men may profit by the redemption he is going to work out!

"The Son of God, about to commence his passion," says St. Catharine of Sienna, "seeing impenitent sinners deprived through their malice of the fruit of his cross, falls into such a profound sadness and such grievous agony, that he sweats water and blood."

Then an angel coming down to him, consoles and strengthens him. Ah! doubtless, the celestial mes-

* 2 Cor., v. 21.

senger represents to him the saving fruits of the sacrifice about to be accomplished ;—sin expiated, hell vanquished, heaven opened, God glorified in time and in eternity ;—doubtless, he shows him all mankind, beseeching him to have pity on them, and save them !

Jesus through humility accepts the services of the angel ; but he will not have him alleviate his agony ; he continues to regard the sufferings which await him, the number and enormity of the sins he has taken upon him, the multitude of souls who will voluntarily be lost, notwithstanding what he is going to suffer in order to redeem them.

The pain he feels is so great that his heart contracts, and his blood accumulates in his chest. But, making an effort over himself, he surmounts all the repugnance he has allowed himself to feel ; and by that effort, his blood, violently impelled, rushes out through all his pores and forms a sweat that penetrates his garments, streams to the ground, and reddens it all around him.

Ah ! let us ask why that effusion of the divine blood took place ? Let us say to Jesus : “ Why then is thy apparel red ”* as scarlet and dyed with thy blood ? It is neither the lashes, nor the nails, nor the spear that draw it from thy veins ; why then does it flow ?

Ah ! I understand : it is to testify to men that thou givest freely, and of thyself, thy life to save them ; that thy love for them is boundless, that thou desirest nothing more than to be baptized with the baptism wherewith thou art to be baptized. It is to give hope of pardon to those who are going to put thee to death, and who, not

* Isa., lxi. 2.

daring to ask it by the blood they will have shed on Calvary or in the pretorium, can always ask it through that which thou hast shed here by thyself; it is to repair the sin committed in the garden of delights, and which, in fact, is fully repaired by the effusion of thy blood in this garden of sorrows.

O divine blood! thou art a salutary rain falling in benediction on the sterile earth four thousand years accursed; thou art an eloquent voice which ascends to heaven only to ask for grace; thou art the more than sufficient price of the ransom of all mankind!

O Jesus, generous Redeemer! thou who substitutest thyself for us to suffer the punishment that we have deserved; thou makest contract so to do and signest it with thy blood! At this moment, thou receivest from thy Father the warrant of our condemnation, to annul it by fastening it with thee to the Cross!

Jesus is the high priest of the New Law; he comes to purify us, "not in water only, but in water and blood;"* that mysterious sweat that we contemplate, is truly the aspersion made on the people by the high priest, when going up to the altar of holocaust; it is more still: it is the beginning of his sacrifice who is at once friend and victim, and by whom only the remission of sins can be obtained.

APPLICATION.

Let us not forget that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent only bear it away: "† yes, there are none crowned but those who, like Jesus in the garden

* 1 St. John, v. 6.

† St. Matt., xi. 12.

of Gethsemane, arm themselves with courage to accomplish the will of God, even by the sacrifice of nature.

Let us pray for grace to overcome our repugnance. Let us be on all occasions courageous against ourselves. What is the combat we have to sustain, compared with that which Jesus sustained for our sake? Let us often recall his agony in the garden of Olives, and, as St. Paul exhorts us, let us consider that we have not yet "resisted into blood?"*

Let us contemplate, by the interior sufferings of Jesus, even after the angel's visit, that very often the presence of grace does not lessen the sense of our sorrows; that, usually, it really acts in us and strengthens us, but without any sensible manifestation of itself; that we may have strength to do good without having the taste for it, and that, consequently, we ought to remain firm in the service of God even though we feel neither sweetness in it nor affection for it.

Let us often think that it is because we have had the misfortune of sinning, that Jesus was overcome with sorrow, reduced to agony; that it was our crimes that brought on that painful sweat that would have been death to him, if, through charity for us, he had not chosen to reserve himself for new torments.

Ah! let us cast ourselves at his feet and ask pardon of him; let us kiss and water with our tears, the ground which he reddened with his blood; let us adore that divine blood which is the price of our ransom; let us respectfully gather up a little, that it may impart to us the grace of our reconciliation, and the sentiments

* Heb., xii. 4.

wherewith the adorable victim of our redemption was animated.

PRAYER.

O most tender Master! what claims thou hast on my gratitude and love! Ah! must not these sentiments, as well as regret for my faults, penetrate my soul at the contemplation of thy agony and bloody sweat! Oh! let me cast myself at thy feet, and bathe with my tears the earth thou hast bathed with thy blood; permit me to tell thee that I hope in thy mercy, and that I found my hope on the infinite charity which made thee accept, notwithstanding the repugnance of thy nature, the grievous part of victim for my salvation.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 384.)

SIXTH MEDITATION.

THE SLEEP OF THE APOSTLES.

“Could you not watch one hour with me ? Watch ye, and pray.”—St. Matt., xxvi. 40, 41.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS, before entering into the garden of Olives, had told his disciples to watch and pray, so that they might not give way to the temptation to which his sufferings were to expose them. Speaking afterwards to Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, who had entered the garden with him, he repeats the same injunction : “My soul is sorrowful even unto death,” said he ; “stay you here and watch with me.”

Then he goes away a stone’s throw from them, and begins to pray.

What motives the apostles have to watch and pray ! Jesus, their divine Master, prescribes it ; he has warned them that they are going to be tried ; that the shepherd shall be stricken, and the sheep of the flock dispersed ; they behold himself preparing for his passion by prayer the most humble, the most persevering ; they know what interior sorrow overwhelms him ; they hear his sighs and groans.

And yet, as though despising his warning, and disregarding his sad state, they give way to sleep. O, criminal indifference ! the enemy is watching for the

opportunity to surprise them, and they do not keep on their guard, they are weak, and seek not in prayer, which is its source, the strength of which they have need. Jesus suffers, and they do not compassionate his pains. He prays for them; and they do not pray with him. What pain must his heart feel! Lo! he interrupts his prayer to come to them.

Comforter of the afflicted, he feels the want of being comforted; strength of the weak, he seeks himself a support; or rather vigilant and charitable Shepherd, he comes to his sheep to guard and preserve them from the danger that threatens them.

He draws near to the apostles, and addressing himself to him whom he has made their chief; "What!" says he, "could you not watch one hour with me?"

Speaking to them all, he adds: "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; for the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Ah! this is truly the language of divine wisdom. What precious teachings do these words contain!

They remind us, in an admirable manner, of human weakness, of our promptness in forming good resolutions and our weakness in accomplishing them, of the war of the spirit against the flesh, and of the flesh against the spirit, of the danger in which we constantly are of offending God, of the necessity of self-distrust, of watchfulness and of prayer:—behold what salutary lessons are given us by the divine Master, and by which alas! we profit so little!

Having thus renewed his recommendations, Jesus returns to his prayer, but soon shall he interrupt it

again. O unexampled goodness and tenderness ! Jesus receives no consolation ; he is, so to say, abandoned by heaven and earth ; and in this state, he is occupied with his apostles and disciples ; he seems to think only of them. For the second time, he returns to his apostles, but as before, he finds them asleep ; how his heart is saddened ! . . . Nevertheless, he reproaches them not. He regards them with compassion ; on their account, he groans over the frailty of man, alas ! so great ever since the day of the first sin ; and he, a third time, goes aside to pray.

He asks in this third prayer that which he had already asked, that the chalice of his passion might be removed from him ; but doubtless he asks again that the faith of Simon Peter may not fail, and that the other disciples may be confirmed by him whom he has chosen for the head of his Church ; he prays also for us who, like the apostles, share so little in his sufferings, and he pleads our cause with his Father.

Let us admire the infinite charity of our Savior, who takes our infirmities upon him and supplies, in one sense, for our inability to watch and pray :—he watches and prays, in order to obtain saving grace even for the souls who are not actually in the disposition of doing violence to themselves to practise virtue. Hence, when he returns a third time to his disciples, he no longer recommends vigilance to them ; he confines himself to saying, with sentiments of immense charity, “ Sleep now, and take your rest ; ” words which may signify—“ Have confidence, I have obtained that you may profit by the fruits of my passion and death, notwith-

standing the little part you take in my sorrows : rest on me."

Nevertheless, as it is not possible for man to be saved without some participation in the sorrows of Jesus, that merciful Master urges them to make an effort over themselves : " Arise," he says to them, " let us go, for behold he is at hand who is to betray me ;" now it is that you must prove, by your courage and fidelity, that you are really my disciples.

APPLICATION.

To us religious is specially addressed the Savior's exhortation, " watch and pray." Ah ! let us ask ourselves whether we are faithful to it.

Do we distrust ourselves ? Are we conscious of our weakness ? Do we know what risks we run, and do we endeavor to avoid them ? Do we watch over our thoughts sometimes so vain, our imagination so extravagant, on our senses so inclined to evil and by which the soul receives such deep wounds ? Do we watch over the weak spot in our heart so as to forestall the enemy, and prevent him from entering in and taking possession of it ?

Do we watch in company with Jesus during meditation ? Are we not in that state of indifference so painful to his tender heart ? Do we not become weary sometimes in his holy presence, in the very moments when he calls us to watch and pray with him ? Do we not allow ourselves to fall into the sleep of tepidity ?

Ah ! if so, let us listen to the divine Master telling us : " What ! you sleep instead of praying ; you sleep

instead of combating the enemies of your salvation ; you sleep instead of working seriously at your sanctification ; you sleep instead of thinking of me, instead of meditating on the sufferings I endure for you ; you cannot watch with me. Ah ! know you not, then, how great an evil it is for you to allow yourself to fall into negligence, into voluntary distractions during prayer, into that spiritual apathy which revolts my heart ?

Let us deplore our criminal conduct, but let us not be discouraged : Jesus prayed to merit for us the grace of a return to fervor ; let us give ear to his words ! “ Arise,” he says, awake from thy sleep and follow me ; I am going to enter on the career you ought to follow in order to gain eternal glory ; remember that those only shall prevail over their enemies who shall watch and pray with me.

Let us watch, then, and pray unceasingly in union with him if we wish to obtain salvation.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! behold how long I have remained sunk in the guilty sleep of indifference and tepidity ; a torpor which I cannot explain to myself, benumbs my soul and paralyzes my will ; I feel that in me the flesh is weak and prone to evil, and that the spirit, although quick in resolving, has not the strength to resist energetically by the practice of mortification : ah ! could I still remain in this state ?

What then, is it for me that thou sufferest inconceivable pains, and for me thou givest thyself up ? I cannot even think some moments on thy sufferings !

and perhaps at the end of the meditation I now commence, I may have deserved that thou reproach me with not having been able to watch one little hour with thee !

Have pity on my weakness and come to my aid, O beloved of my soul ! draw me from this deplorable lethargy ; say unto me, "Arise let us go ;" but say it with that potent voice which effects what it expresses, and I will give myself up, and full of fervor, I will accompany thee in the way wherein thou wouldst have me walk !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 384.)

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

COURAGE OF JESUS AFTER HIS PRAYER.

“Rise up, let us go.”—St. Mark, xiv. 42.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider our Divine Savior ending his long and painful prayer, and quitting the place he had wet with his tears and his blood: he has prepared himself by prayer for the consummation of his sacrifice. The moment is come when, to the pains of the heart, must be added the pains of the body, and that moment he now regards without fear, without sadness.

By his divine spirit from which nought can be hidden, he sees advancing the soldiers and servants who are going to lay their sacrilegious hands upon him; he perceives through the trees of the garden the torches that light their way; he hears their blasphemies and their death-cries; he distinguishes at their head the infamous disciple who has just betrayed him. He knows what torments await him. He sees the cords that are to bind his hands, the bandage that is to cover his eyes, the scourges that are to lacerate his members, the crown that shall pierce his brow, the nails that shall pierce his hands and feet, the cross on which he shall suffer a death of infamy. He knows, too, that his disciples are on the point of deserting him and taking flight.

Nevertheless, he shows no further apprehension. It is but a moment since he was dejected, plunged in sadness, reduced to agony, and now he is courageous and full of strength; he accepts without hesitation the great humiliations he is to undergo; he is firmly resolved to drink even to the dregs the chalice presented to him; the sight of torments and death seems not even to move him; he walks with a firm step, awakes his apostles and says to them: "The hour is come: behold! the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. . . . Rise up, let us go: he that will betray me, is at hand."*

How well this language shows the state of his soul, strong now with all its divine strength! His voice, a moment before subdued with fear, manifests now only a firmness, a courage, a resolution, which nothing can shake.

"Rise up, let us go;" behold the hour of combat, that hour for which I was sent, that hour which I have desired in order to show that I love my Father and do what he hath commanded. No, no! I fear no longer torments or death: and not only do I resign myself to them, but I desire them with a great desire; I burn to have the baptism wherewith I am to be baptized accomplished in my person; for I long to repair my Father's glory, I long to save men, I long to merit for them all the graces they require to fight with me and overcome the enemies of their salvation!

Ah! it is at this moment, oh, my adorable Savior! that thou settest forth as a giant to conquer sin and the devil; it is at this moment that thou mayst say to thy divine

* St. Mark, xiv. 41, 42.

Father those words foretold of thee ages before :—holocausts and other sacrifices did not suffice for the expiation of sin ; wherefore thou gavest me a body ; and then I said, “ behold I come, . . . that I should do thy will ; ”* behold I come ready to shed even the last drop of my blood to satisfy thy justice, to expiate sin and to save souls.

But how has this change been wrought in thee, O divine Master ? Whence comes that courage, that strength of soul infinitely above all that earth and hell can undertake against thee ? Ah ! I hear thee tell me that it is from thy humble and persevering prayer in the Garden of Olives, from the fervent and resigned prayer which penetrated the heavens and ascended to the very throne of thy Father.

And this courage which thou hast derived from prayer, thou wouldst, O my divine Master ! communicate to thy disciples by addressing them in these words : “ Arise, let us go, he is at hand who is to betray me : ” arise, fear nothing : I am with you and I will sustain you in the fight.

But it is not only to his disciples that the Savior says : “ Arise, ” be no longer weighed down by your defects, drawn away by your evil inclinations ; arise and walk, advance towards good ; “ let us go, ” and fear not, for I am with you ; I am at your head, I ask of you only your co-operation ; do what you can, do not spare yourselves, and, on that condition, count on victory ; for, with my grace and my assistance, you can do all, in the affair of salvation.

* Ps. xxxix. 7-9.

O Jesus, O sweet Savior, how great is thy goodness towards us ! Thou sayest not to us, “ Arise, and go—” for whither should we go alone and separated from thee, if not to our eternal ruin ? But thou sayest to us, “ Arise, *let us go*”—to teach us that thou art with us, that thou guidest us in the way we are to take, that thou sustainest us in our conflicts. Ah ! what could we fear in thy company, O thou ! who art the source of all strength, the very Author of grace, by which we are made so powerful ?

APPLICATION.

It was not precisely for himself that Jesus Christ prayed in the garden of Olives ; but rather for us. It was in order to teach us how and in what circumstances we ought to pray, and also to merit for us the favor of being heard.

But alas ! how little we imitate the sublime example he gives us ! Instead of praying, of having recourse to God in our trials, our troubles, our temptations, we seek support in creatures, we are discouraged, dejected ; and perhaps we are even foolish enough to think that we shall find some remedy for our trials and troubles, by allowing ourselves some infractions in our duties, by following our own ideas, our own inclinations.

Ah ! let it not be so in future ; let us cast our eyes on Jesus, deriving from prayer the courage of his sacrifice ; in imitation of him, let us pray, and pray with fervor, especially at the approach of the trying moments, alas ! so frequent in the course of this life.

Let us pray when we feel our spiritual strength

diminish, when work frightens us and the religious life seems to become too painful.

Let us pray when the future presents itself to us under a sad or gloomy aspect, and we shall see the clouds that overshadowed us clear away.

Let us pray when we are overtaken by adversity ; oh ! then let us prostrate ourselves before God, let us offer him our sighs and tears : we shall rise full of strength and courage, and, trusting in him, we shall embrace generously, and even lovingly, the cross he wishes us to bear.

Let us pray in union with Jesus Christ in the garden of Olives ; but let us see that our prayer has the qualities of his ; that is to say, that it be fervent, humble, and persevering. Let us pray, but with that ardor that will make our prayer pierce the heavens, and reach the feet of the Eternal.

Let us watch and pray with Jesus ; let us beware of going alone to meet the enemy, let us never separate from our divine Master ; with him we can do all, without him nothing. Let us pray and watch ; let us never expose ourselves to danger, if we would not that our rashness should be our ruin.

Happy is he who prays and watches ! he is calm and courageous when the moment of trial comes ; he desires only to immolate himself with Jesus Christ for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

PRAYER.

I know that afflictions are inevitable, and yet I shudder when they present themselves, and I am with-

out resignation and without strength to accept them ; ah ! it is that I do not pray, or that I pray badly.

Give me, then, O Jesus, my divine master ! give me, I entreat thee, this spirit of prayer which is likewise the spirit of strength ; grant that united to thee, I may prostrate myself before thy Father in my moments of anxiety or affliction, and expose to him the wants of my soul, beseeching him to have mercy on me. Perhaps I may not obtain that the bitter cup may be removed from me, but thy Father will grant me, what is infinitely preferable, resignation in trials, courage in adversity, and even the love of suffering ; that is to say, the virtues by which alone I can be like unto thee, and deserve to be one day a sharer in thy glory.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 385.)

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE KISS OF JUDAS.

“Forthwith coming to Jesus, . . . he kissed him.”—
St. Matt., xxvi. 49.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us go back to that moment when Jesus, celebrating the last pasch with his apostles, addressed them in these words: “Amen I say to you, that one of you is about to betray me.”* Let us consider the eleven apostles, full of candor and sincerity, asking him, “Is it I, Lord?”

Let us also consider Judas asking him the same question, when he had already sold him to the Jews for thirty pieces of silver.

To perfidy he joins sacrilege, by receiving into his foul heart the body and blood of the adorable Savior; and immediately after he goes out to find the Jews, and prepare all for giving up to them the victim whom they would sacrifice to their envy. He knows that his divine Master is to repair, after supper, to the Garden of Olives, and thither he is about to lead the band wherewith the chief priest has furnished him.

The moment being come, he repairs thither accordingly, at the head of a band taken from amongst the very lowest of the people, with a certain number of the

* St. Matt., xxvi. 21.

soldiers and servants of the high priest. He directs them as to how they are to get hold of the Savior: "Whomsoever I shall kiss," said he "that is he, hold him fast."

Meanwhile the traitor advances to the garden, and, leaving his people behind, he approaches Jesus whom he sees at a distance, and who, on his side, comes towards him, with a sweet and gentle aspect.

Oh ! truly at the sight of his divine master advancing towards him, Judas must have felt horrified, and hesitated in the accomplishment of his crime ; but alas ! he had so often stifled the remorse of his conscience, that it is not suprising if he rejects this new grace, which might still be the means of his salvation.

The wretch dares to approach Jesus, and to say with affected kindness and with hypocritical calmness, "Hail Master."

O infamy ! he calls him his Master when he has sold him for some pieces of silver ! when he delivers him up as a vile slave ! when he has abandoned his school, base apostle that he is, to give himself up to the inspiration of Satan, and to accomplish the work of hell !

He calls him his Master, and saluting him, advances to kiss him. "Stop, O Judas !" says St. Augustine, "what a heinous sacrilege is thine ! Thou makest use of a token of love to inflict a deep wound, and under the symbol of friendship thou givest death !" "O perfidious man !" likewise says St. Ambrose, "how darest thou change into a treacherous sign the most expressive mark of union and of friendship ?"

But the crime of Judas is consummated ; the signal given has been understood ; the innocent victim is pointed out to his enemies ! Jesus has shown no unwillingness to let the base apostate approach him : he has not rejected the touch of the traitor's impure lips, he has not turned away to avoid him : " He lovingly applied his divine mouth," says St. Bernard, " which knew not deceit, to that impious and sacrilegious mouth, which breathed forth only malice and treason."

What a spectacle is presented to our contemplation ! Jesus intertwines his arms with those of the most infamous of men : he presses him to his bosom, he seems to make but one with him ! holiness is confounded with sin, goodness and love with wickedness and hatred ! Oh ! what charity, what generosity !

Jesus will look upon Peter to convert him, he will pray for his enemies, he will address to the good thief words of ineffable consolation : but he seems to do more for Judas—he offers him, he gives him the kiss of reconciliation !

O prodigy of mercy ! who can henceforth despair of his pardon, if he really asks it and repents of his sins ?

But let us hear the words of our divine Master, for, like his acts, they speak to us of his goodness : " Friend, whereto art thou come ? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss ?"

" Friend !" what a title for a traitor ! and yet Jesus calls him still by a name so sweet ! Ah ! who would have expected so much goodness on the part of the Sovereign of heaven and earth, from whom nothing is hidden, and who fathomed to its innermost depths the

heart of the infamous disciple!—He who has declared that he holds deceit in horror, calls “friend” the man who is to remain as the type of deceivers and hypocrites.

O Jesus! how great and generous is thy tenderness! Thou seest this unhappy man consummating his reprobation, and thou employest all the power of charity to soften his hardened heart, and to win it back again to grace, to salvation, to life!

After clasping him in thine arms, thou sayst to him, “Friend, whereto art thou come?” It was the exhortation to re-enter into himself; it was saying: “Thou art come to betray thy Master, to deliver him to his enemies; ah! acknowledge thy crime, I am ready to forgive thee; thou seest that, far from rejecting thee, I press thee lovingly to my heart.”

But no! Judas will not repent, he will not ask pardon of his divine Master; his perverse will resists all the graces offered to him; the sacrilege whereof he is guilty, drags him down to the depth of the abyss of evil, and closes against him every way of returning.

APPLICATION.

We shudder at the thought of the crime and the misfortune of Judas; but do we consider that that crime and that misfortune may be ours, if we do not try to take another way than that which he followed?

Like him, we are companions of the Savior, admitted to secret and most intimate communion with him, nourished with the Eucharistic Bread, called by the name of friends; but do we not abuse, as he did, the graces bestowed upon us? Do we never allow

ourselves to be governed by our evil inclinations? Let us examine ourselves on this point, and distrust ourselves because of our passions, and combat them, for there is none of these that may not lead us to the most deplorable excesses and the greatest misfortunes.

Let us be warned by the example of Judas. It is not at one stroke that he becomes a deicide; if he had been told some months before—"Thou shalt sell thy Savior, thou shalt deliver him to his enemies"—he would have spurned with indignation that fatal prediction; and yet he fell to that degree of wickedness!

Ah! we, too reject now as an injury even the least suspicion of our fidelity; we should be indignant if we were believed capable of betraying our God; and yet if we are not faithful to the divine inspirations, if we do not profit by the graces offered us, if we neglect our duties, our fate shall be that of Judas; for walking in the same way that he followed, we should assuredly fall down the precipice in which it ends, and we should, perchance, come to say to the devil and our passions: "What will you give me, and I will deliver to you the divine Master? Grant me this satisfaction, this honor, this pleasure, and I will drive Jesus from my heart, and give up my soul to you."

Oh! may that misfortune never befall us! may we, on the contrary, always say: "Divine Savior, rather a thousand times over let me lose all, sacrifice all, than separate myself from thee, even for a single moment!"

PRAYER.

O Jesus, from whom nothing is hidden, cast on me a look of merey, and if thou dost discover in my heart any disorderly affection, any tie which binds it to the creature, separate, cut, break : what matters the suffering the trial will cause, provided I am faithful to thee ? Let me not be so unfortunate as to abandon thee, to betray thee, O thou who art the tenderest of friends and the best of masters !

The crime of Judas has struck me with horror. Oh ! grant that there may be no more Judases amongst Christians, and especially amongst religious. Stop us at the first step we might take in the way of evil ; help us to walk faithfully in thy footsteps, to the end that at our last day we may go with confidence to thee, O sweet Savior ! and that we may receive from thine adorable mouth the kiss of peace which makes supreme felicity.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 385.)

NINTH MEDITATION.

JESUS TAKEN BY THE JEWS.

“Then the band, and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews, took Jesus and bound him.”—St. John, xviii. 12.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our adorable Savior advancing towards his enemies, after receiving the kiss of Judas. It is a victim devoting himself voluntarily to death ; it is a tender lamb which, far from complaining at the moment when he is about to be led to the altar of his sacrifice, presents himself to those who are sent to take him ; it is the Son of God offering himself to his Father for the redemption of mankind.

Behold him then, face to face with his enemies, who seem confounded in his divine presence ; no one dares to speak to him and still less to seize his person. He must speak first, as though to bring them to show their intentions concerning him : “Whom seek ye ?” he asks them. Doubtless their embarrassment must have been great, and they would not have dared to say anything, had they not read in the features of that adorable Savior a sort of invitation to express their thought, and to declare the motive of their coming to that place, at that hour. They tell him, therefore, with a certain reserve, that they seek Jesus of Nazareth.

Wishing to give them a new proof of his divinity, and to offer them a new means of salvation, Jesus Christ answers, "I am he," and immediately all drew back, and fell to the ground.

"How admirable it is," says St. Cyril, "to see these barbarous men, come to take our adorable Savior, thrown to the ground by a single word of his! How beautiful it is to recognize in this incident the Almighty power of God, manifesting itself in Jesus Christ at the moment when he is going to offer his hands to be chained, like a slave!"

"Cease," says St. Ambrose, "to speak to me of the legions of angels that Jesus might order down from heaven; for in throwing down his enemies with a single word, he manifests his power in a far different manner, and proves more effectually that he is the Messiah foretold by the prophets."

Nevertheless, it is not to prevent his enemies from taking him that Jesus Christ works this prodigy, but rather to make them enter into themselves: that word which casts them to the ground is a shaft of his mercy, it is an effect of the grace which calls them to repentance.

But, alas! the voice of the Lord, which, according to Scripture, "breaketh the cedars,"* has no influence on Judas, nor on the people who accompany him; their hearts are too hardened, they had abused grace too much not to abuse it still.

Yet, willing to give them still another proof of his power and to manifest his affection for his disciples,

* Ps. xxviii. 5.

Jesus again speaks to the band of wretches who have come to take him, and tells them with as much calmness as majesty: "If, therefore, you seek me, let these go their way."* At this command, the soldiers opened their ranks and allowed the apostles to escape, although it would have been their interest to detain them with their master.

How touching is this trait of the Redeemer's love, by which he fulfilled the words he had addressed to his Father: "Of those whom thou gavest me, I have lost not one!" Forgetful of himself, he thinks only of placing his disciples in safety; ready to accept captivity and death for himself, he secures to them life and liberty.

Jesus does not content himself with giving these two tokens of his power, he compels his enemies to hear his reproaches; he once more addresses them and says: "Are you come out, as it were against a thief, with swords and clubs? when I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against me." †

What majestic language! How well it proves, together with the accompanying facts, that this divine Savior is truly God, the master of his freedom, the willing victim of his sacrifice!

But the moment is at last come—Jesus is going to let his enemies act, "That the scriptures may be fulfilled. . . . This is your hour and the power of darkness."

He then gives himself up to their power.

* St. John, xviii. 8.

† St. Luke, xxii. 52, 53.

Thereupon these wretches lay hold of him, load him with chains, and drag him away with them.

Behold, then, Christian souls, behold your Savior bound as a malefactor ; behold the true Samson taken by the cruel Philistines ; behold that innocent lamb led to the slaughter, or rather, behold your God who has delivered himself for you to your enemies !

“ O perfidious and cruel soldiers ! ” exclaims St. Ambrose, “ do you, then, load with chains the author of life and of liberty, even him at whose feet you ought to cast yourselves, praying him to free you from the bonds of your iniquities ? ”

But no ! devoured by hatred and envy, those wicked men hesitate not in the accomplishment of their crime ; they rejoice to have in their power him whose destruction they have sworn ; and he, full of love for us, allows himself to be grasped by the throat without resistance ; holds out his hands for the chains of his enemies, in order to merit for us deliverance from the chains of sin, whereby the devil holds us captive.

APPLICATION.

Let us adore the power of our Divine Redeemer who casts his enemies to the ground by the speaking of a single word : “ I am he. ” Let us think that he often addresses it to us, and examine whether it has its full effect on our souls.

Doth he not say to us : “ I am he ” whom you offend ; “ I am he ” whom you serve so badly ; “ I am he ” who ought to be the continual object of your thoughts, and who yet is seldom present to your mind, even on

the days when I have given myself to you in my sacrament. Oh! let us, then, understand what our adorable Master would have us do, and practise it generously.

Let the power which he manifests to his enemies by the words, "I am he," make us think of that which he will manifest before the whole world when he shall come, at the last day, to judge all men. Let us impress our minds with sentiments of salutary fear, and say with St. Augustine: "How terrible will this Jesus be when he shall come to reign, who is so terrible now when about to die!"

Let us ask ourselves why our adorable Savior has permitted himself to be taken and bound by his enemies, and let us understand that it is to merit for us the grace of breaking the ties that keep us in sin; to obtain for us strength and courage to break off every attachment of our heart to creatures, every fatal habit that would retain us in evil, every dangerous connection that might become, in our regard, a chain placed in the hands of Satan to drag us into the abyss. Let us understand, also, that it is to obtain for us the peace to attach ourselves only to God, to his service, to our holy vocation, and to be indissolubly united to our divine Redeemer by the sweet ties of piety and charity.

Oh! how he has loved us! He is truly the slave of his love for us. Yes, it is his love that delivers him to his enemies, that binds his hands, that is going to drag him to the altar of his immolation. How can we recall this without blessing him for it, without exalting his goodness, without resolving to love him as long as we are able to love!

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! who, to break our chains, consented to be bound like a malefactor by an insolent and ferocious band, we give thee thanks for having freed us from the shameful bondage of our passions, and made us partakers of the liberty of the children of God. Oh ! how precious is that liberty which thou hast procured for us ! but alas ! it often happens that I cease to value it, and willingly deprive myself of so great a good.

Unhappy that I am, thou hast delivered me from my bonds by the grace of baptism, and afterwards by that of the sacrament of penance, and I, by my negligence, forge for myself new chains ! Have mercy on me, Lord ! and help me ; grant that I may persevere in my present resolution of being all thine, to the end that my soul may have no other ties than the sweet and pleasant ones of thy most pure love.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 386.)

TENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM.

“Then, apprehending him, they led him to the high priest’s house.”—St. Luke, xxii. 54.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS is in the power of his enemies. He had said : “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners,”* and that word is accomplished. Hours before, the Passion of his soul began, and now begins that of his body.

What sorrows, what opprobrium does he not endure?

Weakened by his agony and bloody sweat, his heart broken by the treason of Judas and the flight of the other apostles, he sees himself in the power of the inhuman soldiers who mock and insult him without pity.

The prophets had seen him in that state ; hence they represent him as a lamb surrounded by a multitude of ravenous dogs, of ferocious wolves, of roaring lions ready to devour him.

“Hold him fast,” Judas had told them ; see that he does not escape : and in pursuance of this advice, the soldiers bind him tightly with many cords ; they crowd around him and enclose him as in a circle.

* St. Mark, xiv. 41.

Let us contemplate the true Samson in the hands of the new Philistines. They exult in having him at last in their power, and their triumph is most insolent and tyrannical. Let us hear them as they shout in mockery and derision, call their divine captive every odious name, and insulting in every possible way him who bears their outrages without resistance, without anger, without complaint, without emotion.

It depends on himself to renew the prodigy of Samson breaking his bonds, and striking dead those who had bound him. He has but to will it, and immediately his chains shall be broken, and all his enemies cast down dead! . . . But such is not his purpose: he wants to expiate our sins in as much as they are the abuse of our liberty; he wants to merit for us the grace of breaking the bonds of our iniquities, the chains of our evil habits; he wants to free us from the slavery of the devil to establish us in the liberty of the children of God; he wants to merit for the martyrs and confessors of the Faith all the graves of which they shall have need, when the enemies of religion shall seize and drag them to prison, and thence before the judgment seat:—for this it is that he holds out his hands to the chains which are to bind them. What charity to us! What devotion to the glory of his Church!

“If he represses his power,” says St. Leo, “if he permits all the hatred of his enemies to vent itself on his adorable person, it is an effect of that same will whereby he has always loved us.” Yes, if Jesus is in the power of his enemies, it is his love for us that has given him up to them. O love, how strong art thou! thou bindest God himself.

Meanwhile, the sad procession sets forward on its march. What a humiliation for Jesus to be led away thus like a malefactor ! He makes no resistance ; he alleges neither his weakness nor his fatigue ; he offers no remark on the way in which he is treated : he is a lamb, mute in the hands of those who lead him to the slaughter, or rather to the altar on which he is going to be immolated.

Without allowing even one complaint to escape him, he does all he is ordered ; he takes the way pointed out to him ; he walks through mud, through water, and over stones, wherever his conductors please.

Forgetting himself to think only of the work of our reconciliation with heaven, he regards all the contempt, all the indignity wherewith he is loaded, as the strokes of divine justice, avenging on his sacred humanity the sins of men ; he offers up these sufferings, these indignities, to the Eternal Father, to obtain from his infinite mercy the pardon of all our iniquities. He makes no movement, breathes no sigh, suffers no single pain that he does not apply to our salvation, our deliverance ; he thinks only of drawing us from the way of vice and perdition, to make us walk in that of virtue and happiness.

The soldiers continue to treat him with the greatest inhumanity ; fearing that he may escape them, or that some of his friends may come to deliver him, they urge him to hasten his steps, and with that intention, some pull him by the cords wherewith he is bound, others brutally push him on, some strike him with a stick, others belch forth the most revolting blasphemy, the vilest epithets.

The cortége at last reaches Jerusalem. Oh ! how different is the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem from that which he had made five days before ! Then a great multitude came forth to meet him, with acclamation, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David !" * and now he is in the hands of cruel enemies shouting their death cries, insulting him in the most odious manner, and seeming, under cover of the darkness, to be emboldened to lay their sacrilegious hands upon him. Then they went to meet him as a conqueror with palms in their hands, and now they treat him as a criminal with the grossest indignity.

O strange instability of the world ! O ingratitude of men who ignore the benefits they have received from Jesus, who repay only with outrage the miracles he has wrought in their behalf ! O inconceivable patience, O generosity of our divine Redeemer, who resigns himself to every humiliation to restore us to the state of glory from which we had fallen, and who accepts all manner of suffering and opprobrium as so many penalties for our sins, the responsibility of which he has taken upon himself before his Father !

APPLICATION.

Let us admire the patience, the meekness, the infinite charity of Jesus, the august Victim of our Redemption, allowing himself to be dragged, without complaining, to the altar of sacrifice, or rather going thither of himself, through the great desire he has to work out our salvation.

* St. Matt., xxi. 9.

Let us compassionate what he suffers on this occasion when he is surrounded by a crowd of wicked men, dishonored, buffeted, treated worse than the greatest of villains.

Let us magnify his generosity: let us never forget that he became a captive to deliver us from the slavery of sin, that he allowed himself to be loaded with chains to break ours; that he was dragged to death to put us again in the way of life.

Oh! how astonishing is his love for us! Who can ever celebrate worthily the divine Heart which is its focus!

In order to form an idea of what we owe to him, it is necessary to understand the misfortune of a soul which the devils hold captive,—which they lead at will,—which they degrade more and more,—on which they exercise their cruel sway,—which they are dragging down to the fiery abyss wherein are everlasting tears and despair. What a fate! And it is from this fate that Jesus delivers us by his sufferings!

Let us bless the divine Liberator, and profit by his merits. Perhaps our soul is now the slave of Satan. Ah! if so, let us have recourse to Jesus, reminding him of what he has done for our deliverance; let us beseech him to assist us by his grace to break the shameful bonds wherewith the devils bind us, and to make us walk in his train in the narrow way which alone leads to life.

Let us follow in the footsteps of our adorable Master. With him, let us take the way of pain and humiliation, and we shall one day arrive with him, at the abode of glory and bliss to which it leads.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! who, in order to merit for us the privilege of being freed from the devils, suffered thyself to be dragged ignominiously from Gethsemane to Jerusalem, and through the streets of that city along which thou hast so often passed, multiplying thy benefits, have mercy on sinners ! How pitiable is their lot ! Thy enemies and ours hold them in their power ; they are leading them wheresoever they will ; they are dragging them to hell. Ah ! come to their assistance, and save them !

O Jesus, have mercy on my poor soul. Alas ! am I not myself the slave of demons ? Do they not keep me bound by my self-love, by my pride, by my sloth ? are they not taking me whither they will ? are they not leading me on to tepidity, to drag me afterwards to sin and death ? Grant, by thy grace, that I may break asunder these odious chains, so that I may be, till my life's end, only the slave of thy love.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 386.)

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS BEFORE ANNAS.

“They led him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas.”—St. John, xviii. 13.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider our Divine Savior in the power of his enemies who have resolved on his ruin.

They would have him declared worthy of death, and have their judgment confirmed by the governor. But what cause can they assign for the condemnation of a man who had defied them to convict him of a single sin? Above all, how is Pilate to be brought to sanction that sentence, if it have not sufficient grounds, and be but evident injustice? Their hatred, their envy might well lead them to sacrifice an innocent man, but they had no reason to think that the governor shared the same sentiments. And yet his concurrence was indispensable to them.

It was expedient, then, that in order to gain their end, they should put forward some pretext that would have a reasonable appearance, and on which they might found their accusations against Jesus; hence they adopted the plan of indicting him before their own tribunals, and, according to his answers, to concert afterwards amongst themselves what charges they should bring against him at Pilate's tribunal.

They commence with taking him before Annas, the former high-priest; he was a man avaricious, proud, voluptuous, cruel, the inveterate enemy of the life and person of Jesus. Having grown old in malice, he was the fittest person to correspond with the views of the other enemies of that Divine Savior, and to suggest to them the means to be taken in order to make the just man, whose ruin they were compassing, worthy of death. They also wished to give that base pontiff the barbarous satisfaction of seeing at his feet him whose virtue and reputation so strongly excited his hatred and envy.

In the hope that, this time, the enterprise against the Savior would succeed, and that he would soon be brought before him, Annas had all things prepared; the tribunal was erected, the judges were assembled, and the people who were devoted to that wicked pontiff, were warned to be ready to applaud the iniquitous sentence which he thought he would be enabled to pronounce.

Meanwhile Jesus arrives; the soldiers bring him in, and place him in the midst of that impious assembly; all eyes are turned towards him, and each one seems to have no other thought, no other wish, no other ambition, than to see him confounded, humbled, condemned to death.

Ah! let us contemplate him with the liveliest compassion, in the state to which he is reduced! There he stands, in the midst of his enemies, and in the posture of a criminal; his garments torn and tossed bear witness to the ill treatment he has already undergone; his face is pale and haggard; his head is bent forward, his eyes

cast to the ground ; his hair, moist with the sweat of his agony, falls dishevelled on his shoulders ; his knees are bending with fatigue ; his hands are bound, manacled like those of a common malefactor ; his ears hear only insulting words, blasphemies against his adorable person and his divine doctrine ; his heart is sunk in most bitter sorrow.

Ah ! this is, indeed, the victim of the great sacrifice, the Lamb who is about to be immolated, by the fury of men, to the divine justice, which he has charged himself to satisfy for our crimes.

Annas interrogates Jesus ; but the Divine Master refuses to answer him : his silence, which ought to have made his enemies re-enter into themselves, did but increase their fury, and because it defeats their projects, they see in it only a motive for renewing their cruel outrages against him.

Oh ! what astonishment for the celestial spirits to consider the Most High, the God thrice holy, appearing before a miserable man, and in the attitude of a criminal before his judge ! What is their surprise, their indignation, to hear an infamous sinner address reproaches to him who alone is true virtue—to see a vile creature authoritatively question the Creator—an ignorant man seeking to surprise the very wisdom of God in his words—a sacrilegious priest arrogating to himself the right of judging the eternal Pontiff !

Ah ! like them, let us be amazed—or rather, let us not be surprised, for we know, alas ! by a too sad experience that man is capable of all evil ; and we know well enough the heart of our generous Savior, not to

wonder if he drains, alone through love for us, the chalice of all sorrows and of all humiliations.

He drinks it with long draughts, at this moment when he leaves all the powers of darkness free to act; he suffers cruel pains in that inclosure where, amongst the multitude present, there is not a single man but insults and abuses him.

And yet he remains calm and resigned: he says not a word, he lets no complaint escape him; his heart, incapable of hatred or resentment, feels only love and pity for his enemies; he offers to his divine Father the bad treatment with which he is overwhelmed, and prays for the salvation even of those who abuse him.

APPLICATION.

Let us learn from the example of our divine Redeemer to suffer like him, without complaining, the injustice of men, and to be full of charity even to our enemies. Disciples of a God despised, hated, calumniated, need we be surprised, and can we dare to complain, at being treated as our Master was?

If we are accused, despised, rejected, let us think of Jesus before Annas. Let us hear the accusations brought against him, the insulting words addressed to him; and then ask ourselves whether we have a right to plume ourselves on a reputation ill-understood, whilst our Lord and our God was buffeted and degraded to the very lowest.

Patience, therefore, and resignation, if we are humbled, outraged, if all manner of evil is falsely said of us! Was not infinitely more done to Jesus? and are we not,

like him, free from all blame, and in a position to defy our enemies to convict us of sin?

Ah! we deceive ourselves if we hope to sanctify ourselves by any other way than that of humility and abnegation: it is the only one that Christ followed; no other can lead us to salvation.

Let us take care that some disorderly passion is not the principle of our words, of our actions, of our conduct; let us often examine by what motive we act; if we truly seek God and not the gratification of self-love.

Let us watch carefully over the affections of our heart and the thoughts of our mind, so that envy and jealousy may never enter in; let us see whither those passions led the Jews in regard to our Lord. Let us love our brothers, and let charity be the only sentiment that reigns in our souls; let our line of conduct be the very opposite to that of the Pharisees; let us be severe towards ourselves and indulgent to others.

Let us always act with uprightness and simplicity, avoiding all cunning, all deceit, because sooner or later the double mind finds itself confounded.

Let us faithfully observe this conduct; and by that means we shall please Jesus Christ, we shall gladden his divine heart, we shall offer him a compensation for the outrages he endured on the part of the Jews, and we shall apply to ourselves the merits of his sacrifice.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, Eternal Wisdom! what can they be but fools who oppose thee! Thy very silence suffices to defeat their schemes, and turn them to their own con-

fusion! Give me, I beseech thee, simplicity and uprightness of heart, to the end that I may never inspire myself with that carnal prudence which is but folly before thee, and which ends only in confusion. Free me, O my God! from all prejudice, from all envy, and grant that charity only may reign in my soul!

Grant me also the grace of sincere humility: ah! how shameful it is for me to resemble thee so little! I have contemplated thee become an object of contempt for men: would I, then, still desire their esteem? Oh! no! let it be so no more, O my divine Master! grant that I may walk faithfully in thy footsteps, and that I may appreciate only what can give me some conformity with thee.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 387.)

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS BROUGHT TO CAIAPHAS.

“Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest.”—
St. John, xviii. 24.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our divine Savior still before the pontiff Annas, who continues to humble him and to put insidious questions to him ; he replies to none, and by that silence disconcerts his enemies. Hence this first examination will be of no avail : the eternal wisdom therein defeats the malice of hell, and it results in proving that there was nothing in Jesus to blame, and that, consequently, those who sought to have him condemned were themselves worthy of condemnation.

But those wretches, blinded by envy, reflect not on the injustice of their conduct, and will carry out to the end their iniquitous design. Annas can find nothing reprehensible in Jesus ; nevertheless, he orders him to be still more tightly bound than when he was brought before him, and he commands him to be brought before the tribunal of Caiaphas, his son-in-law, the high priest of that year.

Let us behold, then, the divine Redeemer dragged anew by those who had so inhumanly brought him from the garden of Olives to Jerusalem ; let us accompany him going from that tribunal to a second, where he is to

undergo insults still greater than those he had already experienced, and suffering by the way all sorts of indignity and outrage.

Let us contemplate him traversing the streets of Jerusalem that night of gloom and guilt ; he is bound with cords as the holy Gospel indicates ; his steps are tottering, his whole appearance denotes excessive fatigue, utter prostration ; and yet the soldiers and servants mock his pains and insult him without pity ; they pull roughly the cords that bind him ; they push him rudely from side to side, they seem to profit by the darkness of night to exercise their cruelty more freely ; several Pharisees are amongst these wretches, scoffing and mocking him ; and thus commences that horrible concert of sacrilegious mockery which shall continue till the moment when the divine Savior expires on Calvary.

Ah ! who shall tell us what he suffers at this moment ? who shall sound the abyss of grief in which his heart is plunged ?

He is the king of Sion, and he receives in Sion, and from his subjects, only outrage and ignominy ; a crowd, already considerable, goes before and after him, but it is to cry out for his death ; the noise of the hideous mob to which he is given over, awakes by the way the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who inquire what is going on, and who soon will come forth to increase the number, already so great, of those who are clamoring for the death of the adorable victim.

If, from time to time, Jesus raises his eyes, he sees not even one of his own followers who might console

him, at least by his presence ; he meets no pitying face. In those streets of Jerusalem where he had performed so many cures, he beholds only his enemies eager for his ruin.

Oh ! with what a sword of grief his divine soul is transpierced ! for in fine, those who abuse him and compass his death, are his people, his children ; and he has for them infinitely more affection than the tenderest of mothers could have for an only son. He loves them with a boundless love, and he sees himself despised, hated, rejected ; all are animated with the same fury, all load him with curses as they drag him before a bloody tribunal !

Oh ! how eloquently does the state to which he is reduced speak to our hearts, in these first circumstances of his grievous passion !

Come, my children !—that adorable Master seems to say to us,—behold to what a degree I love you, since it is for you I submit to so much humiliation.

Behold me in the power of furious enemies ; no one takes up my defence ; my friends and my kindred have abandoned me, my apostles have forsaken me, I bear alone the weight of my sorrow, because I must bear alone your iniquities. The pain I feel is that which your crimes have deserved ; these chains wherewith I am loaded, are the bonds whereby the devil held you captive and was dragging you into the eternal abyss ; I patiently suffer my enemies to make the most horrible imprecations against me, in order to preserve you from the divine malediction which you have deserved ; I resign myself to all the ill-treatment they give me, in

order to save you from the punishment reserved for sinners ; I will not prevent the tribunal before which they take me from pronouncing an iniquitous sentence, and that in order to preserve you from the sentence of damnation which was so justly your due.

Oh ! what sentiments of gratitude ought to be excited within us at sight of our Lord's devotedness in sacrificing himself to save us, resigning himself for our sake to be dragged ignominiously through the streets of Jerusalem, to be brought before the supreme tribunal of the nation, there to be interrogated and judged as a criminal !

He is the thrice holy God, and he consents to be a prisoner, and afterwards a condemned malefactor—and he is even already condemned by the members of the grand Council, before whom he has not yet appeared, but who have long decided to pass sentence of death upon him.

He is a victim fore-doomed to a cruel immolation, but resigning himself to every pain in order to expiate our sins.

APPLICATION.

We have contemplated our adorable Savior, the anointed King of Sion, given up to the power of the wicked, ignominiously dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, receiving nought but outrage in the very capital,—hearing, instead of acclamations and shouts of joy, only insults, curses, and blasphemies.

Oh ! let us not forget this circumstance of the passion of Jesus, when, in the discharge of our duties,

we pass along the streets of the cities in which we are employed. Let us be recollected, modest, united with God; let us pray, meditate, watch over our senses, and in case we should become the object of derision, let us esteem ourselves happy in being treated as was our divine Master; like him, let us bear it with patience and resignation, and pray for the conversion of those who insult us.

Let us try, by our fervor and our fidelity in the service of Jesus, to make his divine heart forget the sorrows wherewith it was overwhelmed during his passion.

Let us revive within us the most lively sentiments of love and gratitude toward him, remembering that he endured curses and blasphemies to merit for us that we might not be accursed of God his Father; and that he endured all manner of abuse in order to free us from the everlasting pain and contempt we ought to suffer on account of our sins.

Ah! with thoughts like these, how could we but love him with the greatest love? How could we but bless and thank him unceasingly? How could we but devote ourselves unreservedly to him, and only regret being unable to do more for his glory?

Let us prostrate ourselves in his presence, offer him our homage, and form the sincere resolution, not only to do nothing that may displease him, but to act in all things, only by the movement of his love and in perfect conformity to his divine will.

PRAYER.

I adore thee, O my divine Redeemer ! whom I contemplate led from the house of Annas to that of Caiaphas, and left at the mercy of a band of wretches who unceasingly insult and illtreat thee in every possible way : these unhappy men know that the people are still favorable to thee, wherefore they profit by the darkness of night to torture thee and glut their rage upon thee. Soon alas ! they will have gained over the populace, and then shall no longer fear to abuse and maltreat thee in open day and before the multitude : hence, the very darkness of night is for thee, at this moment, an occasion of suffering, to which thou resignest thyself without uttering so much as one complaint.

But why, O my adorable Savior, wouldst thou suffer by night and by day ? Ah ! I understand ; it is because thou art the victim of expiation, and the night and the day have been equally profaned by our sins.

Oh ! grant that I may weep both day and night for those sins which are the true cause of our suffering, and may never more commit them.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 387.)

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS BEFORE CAIAPHAS.

“They led him to Caiaphas, the high priest.”—St. Matt., xxvi. 57.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider before what persons Jesus is going to appear. Annas sends him bound to Caiaphas, his son-in-law, and the council of the ancients and doctors of the law assembled at the house of that pontiff.

Caiaphas was an artful man who, as St. Jerome asserts, had sold for gold the pontifical dignity. He had been long seeking the death of Jesus, as he publicly showed in an assembly called together on the occasion of the resurrection of Lazarus, when—addressing the Pharisees who composed it—he spoke these words the full meaning of which he did not understand: “You know nothing at all; neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”*

Caiaphas is the author of the base plot formed against Jesus, whose most cruel and hypocritical enemy he is. It was he that sent his people to Gethsemane to seize that divine Master, and bring him into his presence.

He assembles at his house, at that late hour of the

* St. John, xi. 49, 50.

night, the council of the nation, of which he is the president by virtue of his office, and which is composed of the enemies of Jesus.

Let us transport ourselves in spirit to the hall where the priests, the ancients of the people, and the doctors of the law, are seated, waiting till the august captive is brought before them.

They form that iniquitous assembly concerning which the Holy Ghost had said by David: "From the face of the wicked who have afflicted me. My enemies have surrounded my soul."* They likewise fulfil that which was revealed in the book of Wisdom, where it is written that the wicked form plots against the just, saying: "Let us condemn him to a most shameful death."†

Oh! how clearly these words reveal to us the perversity of the chiefs of the Jewish nation at that moment which Jesus called the "hour of the powers of darkness!" Yes! it is indeed they who, having decided beforehand to put to death him whose holiness and justice excited their envy, say amongst themselves, "Let us condemn him," and not, "Let us examine whether he deserves to be condemned."

Ah! they well know that there is nothing in him that can be even censured, for he has publicly said to them, "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"‡ They well know that his whole life has been one unbroken series of benefits; that he has healed the sick, driven out devils, raised many dead to life. "But," says St. Augustine, "these wretches appear to have forgotten

* Ps., xvi. 9.

† Wisdom, ii. 20.

‡ St. John, viii. 46.

this, and like persons in the delirium of fever, they are angry with the physician who came to cure them, and they have combined to destroy him.”*

The chief priests and the doctors of the law are those husbandmen mentioned in the Gospel, to whom the father of the family sent his own son, and who, plotting, say amongst themselves: “This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard.”†

This tribunal, before which Jesus is about to appear, is not composed of upright men, assembled to examine his cause and administer justice to him; but rather of murderers turned into judges, and having but one end in view—the immolation of him whom they make show of trying. Oh! what injustice! what a subversion of all order! what hypocrisy!

They are criminals, the miserable slaves of their passions, who arrogate to themselves the right of summoning before them to be judged him who is justice itself—him who is the supreme judge of the living and the dead: it is under the false pretence of defending law and religion that they plot the death of the supreme Law-giver, of the very Author of religion! Apparently, it is zeal for sacred worship that animates them; whilst, in reality, it is a base and cruel envy of him whose glory and sanctity they cannot endure.

Such are the men before whom Jesus is about to be arraigned. He arrives, in fact, in the hall where they are assembled. He appears before them ignominiously bound, and surrounded by soldiers and the servants of the high priest; all eyes are turned upon him, and

* Treatise on the Psalms, Ps. lxiii. 2.

† St. Matt., xxi. 38.

every member of the council manifests a barbarous pleasure in seeing him at his feet, and in the attitude of a criminal awaiting his sentence.

Oh! who shall tell us what our adorable Master feels in his heart? He sees only enemies without fear of God, and resolved to violate all the laws of justice. Standing before that assembly of the wicked, he appears crushed beneath the weight of humiliations, and perceives only subjects of pain and sorrow; words of insult and of blasphemy alone strike his ear; no friendly look meets his eye; no one takes up his defence, no one says a word in his behalf, no one recalls his holy life, no one speaks of the sublimity of his doctrine nor the good he has done; all desire his death without having even the shadow of a reason, without even being able to convict him of any fault or of any violation of the law;—"and this," says St. Augustine, "is their great iniquity, for it is at this moment that he might again say to them: 'Many good works I have shown to you from my father; for which of these works do you take my life?'"*

But no! he repeats not these words because his hour is come.

Voluntary victim of the great sacrifice, he remains calm and silent; he offers himself to his divine Father as the hostage for our reconciliation with heaven; he merits for the holy martyrs and confessors of the faith that superhuman strength and courage which they are to display, in the course of ages, before tyrants and executioners.

* St. John, x. 32.

APPLICATION.

Let us pay our homage to Jesus our divine Savior, let us adore him as king and chief of the martyrs; and pray him, by what he suffered at the tribunal of Caiaphas, to give us the strength and courage of which we have need to persevere to the end in the accomplishment of the duties of our state.

Let the consideration of the perversity of the enemies of Jesus inspire us with the greatest horror of all hypocrisy; let us be always free and sincere; let us be what we ought to be before God and before men. Let us be very careful never to make pretence of the interests of religion to gratify our personal resentment.

Let us, while placing before our eyes the picture of his sorrows, excite ourselves more and more to gratitude towards Jesus who, being the son of God and equal to God, devoted himself for us even to making himself the victim of our redemption. Let us think that he endures them only for us, and to deliver us from the everlasting torments we have deserved. Let us try, then, to comprehend what he has done for our salvation, and to return him devotion for devotion, love for love.

Let his example lead us to the practice of patience and mortification; let us propose to ourselves to offer to God, his Father, some sacrifice in the course of this day, in union with what he suffered at the tribunal of Caiaphas: and in order to facilitate to ourselves the accomplishment of what we have resolved upon, let us imagine that we see him in presence of his enemies, patiently listening to their calumnies, and for our sake bearing all the ill-treatment.

PRAYER.

I behold you there, at the feet of Caiaphas, O Jesus ! and I see you throttled as a criminal,—you the pontiff of pontiffs, who art innocence and sanctity themselves. What confusion you feel, O my God ! and what can there be more fit to confound my pride and all my susceptibility ?

I can bear nothing, and yet I call thee my master and my model,—thou who didst drain to the dregs the chalice of humiliation.

Oh ! Lord, I blush in thy presence for the inconsistency of my conduct, and I propose to conduct myself for the future in a manner truly conformable to the example thou hast given me ; I will often recall it to my mind during this day, and if there is any thing to be suffered, I will contemplate thee appearing before thine enemies ; and that contemplation, exciting in my heart, by thy grace, the desire of becoming like unto thee, will render me patient in adversity and disposed to bear all for thy sake.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 388.)

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS RECEIVES A BLOW.

“One of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow.”—
St. John, xviii. 22.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate, Christian souls! our divine Savior standing in the midst of the great council of the Jews, of that assembly of proud Pharisees who regard him with contempt, who treat him as a man of no account, as a false prophet, a seducer,—He, the God by whom all subsists, the promised Messiah, and holiness itself!

Let us admire him listening mildly and in silence to his enemies. They put a multitude of questions to him, for the purpose of ensnaring him, and so obtaining some cause of accusing and condemning him; but he does not see fit to answer them. Then the high priest interrogates him on his disciples and his doctrine, flattering himself, says St. John Chrysostom, that he would find something reprehensible in his words, and thus manage to make him appear a seditious character, and a dangerous innovator in the matter of religion.*

The divine Master might, as before, keep silence, but he will not do so. It is important that he shall make

* Hom., 82.

known to all that his doctrine is not a hidden doctrine, which is only communicated in darkness ; he answers calmly and mildly : “ I have spoken openly to the world ; I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort ; and in private I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou me ? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken to them : behold, they know what things I have said.”*

“ One can imagine nothing,” says St. Augustine, “ sweeter, more sensible, or more just than these words : ”—by them, Jesus makes known to all that his teaching has always been public ; that, consequently, he never feared its being examined ; by them, he appeals to all the people, even his enemies themselves ; furthermore, he could not have directly eulogized his own doctrine before those ill-disposed men who would, as they had already done, have reproached him with giving testimony of himself.†

His answer was then eminently sensible ; but those to whom he made it were exasperated because it was not favorable to their criminal design ; it was the more vexatious to their pride because it was perfectly reasonable, and they could find in it nothing to censure : hence their spite became visible on their face, and their eyes expressed the desire of brutal revenge.

Then it was that an officer, or rather a vile slave, of the high priest, entering into the intentions of the members of the council, draws near to Jesus, raises his sacrilegious hand, and strikes him violently in the face, saying, “ Answerest thou the high priest so ? ”

* St. John, xviii. 20, 21.

† *Ibid.*, iii. 13.

“At sight of this outrage,” says St. Ephraim, “the heavens are dismayed, and the angels shudder with horror.” They were astonished that the earth did not open and swallow the wretch who had dared to commit an act so barbarous, a sacrilege so horrible!

“O indignity! O affront!” exclaims St. Chrysostom; “can we imagine an outrage more grievous, an insult more revolting?” What! The King of Glory is maltreated by a vile slave! The Son of God is struck by a base hireling! That august face before which the celestial spirits veil themselves with their wings, unable to bear its splendor, is bruised by the hand of a wretched mortal! . . . And it is before the first of tribunals that this crime is committed with impunity! it is committed in presence of the pontiff of the law and by one of the people attached to his service!

Even if this wretch had given this blow to one of his equals, he would have been most culpable; if he had given it to an earthly sovereign, he would have committed a crime of high treason, incurring the full severity of the law:—by what name could we, then, designate his crime, in having dared to strike the Son of God himself, and what punishment could be justly awarded to him?

But let us not limit ourselves to exciting in our hearts sentiments of indignation against this sacrilegious servant and the members of the iniquitous tribunal which authorizes his crime; let us cast ourselves at the feet of our adorable Savior to make reparation to him.

Let us also beg of him to make known to us the motives from which he resigned himself to be buffeted

in a manner so cruel and so humiliating. Let us hear him tell us that he bore that outrage that we might conceive what grief and what shame are caused him by the conduct of those who are ashamed of him and his religion, who refuse to acknowledge him as their God, and to pay him the homage of their heart ; let us hear him tell us that he endured it in order to expiate our pride and our sins of human respect, as well as to excite us to follow him courageously in the way of his humiliations, and to merit that grace for us.

Oh ! what an example he gives us on this occasion, when he presents his face to be buffeted, while waiting to present his whole body to the blows of the executioners ; when, without complaining, without murmuring, he suffers the greatest of all insults !

If he speak, it is not to address reproaches to the cruel man who has struck him, but to make him enter into himself and bring him to a salutary repentance ; it is to give a useful lesson to the high priest and the other members of the Council ; it is to prove that being a faithful observer of the law he has come to accomplish, he had always given an example of the greatest respect towards the high priest ; that, having nowise deserved this punishment, he endured the blow for us, the true criminals, who ought, on account of our want of respect to God, to be treated with the greatest contempt, and that for all eternity.

APPLICATION.

Let us, then, understand the precious teachings which our divine Master gives us by his acts and by his

words ; let us learn of him that he is really meek and humble of heart, and beg of him the grace to imitate him, to suffer, like him and for his sake, everything painful, annoying, and humiliating, that may happen to us.

“By what right,” says St. Athanasius, “would we dare, sinners as we are, to complain of the injustice of our brethren to us, since we see the son of God, innocence itself, bear with so much patience, through love for us, the atrocious insult offered him by men ?” No, no ! let us not be jealous of the esteem of our fellow-beings, nor susceptible on the point of honor ; if we would really be disciples of Jesus Christ, let us imitate his meekness, let us bear patiently and for his sake the injustice of those who have, in common with us, the nature of man, the condition of slave, the sad quality of sinners.

Let us thank, with our whole heart, the adorable Jesus for having endured so great an injury in order to expiate our sins of pride, and to preserve us from the eternal confusion we have deserved by our prevarications.

Let us be his, entirely his, and let us give him a proof thereof by avoiding with the greatest care all that may be displeasing to him. Let us remember that every sin is an outrage infinitely more sensible to his tender heart than the blow he received at the tribunal of Caiaphas. Let us therefore sin no more ; and let us, by our fidelity, make him forget all the faults we have had the misfortune to commit up to this day.

PRAYER.

O most kind Jesus! who not only turnest not away thy face from the wretch who strikes thee a blow, but who regardest him with eyes full of charity and offerest him the kiss of reconciliation, neither turn it away from me who have, alas! so cruelly struck thee by my sins. Look upon me in thy charity, and forgive me.

Grant also, by thy grace, that I may imitate thy meekness; that, walking in thy footsteps, I may resign myself, for thy sake, to all the humiliations it may please thee to send me, and that I may never allow into my heart any other sentiments than those of resignation, patience, and forgiveness of injuries.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 388.)

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS ACCUSED BY FALSE WITNESSES.

“The chief priests, and the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus.”—St. Matt., xxvi. 59.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider with horror to what a degree of wickedness the enemies of our divine Master have descended; they propose to themselves the most iniquitous end—they act on the most depraved sentiments—they employ the most unjust means.

The end they have in view is to malign and put to death Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Supreme King, whose sanctity they nevertheless know, and from whom they have ever received only benefits; it is to annihilate, as far as they possibly can, his doctrine and his honor; it is to destroy the work of salvation which he came to accomplish. Can any thing more criminal be conceived?

And why do they form this design? What motives incite them to it, if not envy and jealousy, the basest and worst of passions? The devils have got the mastery of their hearts; wherefore it is that they share in the hatred of those malignant spirits for the Just by excellence, and in their desire to see him humbled and put to death.

Under the control of these vicious sentiments, and in order to attain their end, they employ the most odious means: already have they called in treachery, hypocrisy, violence, and behold! they now have recourse to falsehood and perjury: "The chief priests and the whole council sought false witnesses against Jesus that they might put him to death."*

Behold, then, judges who, obliged by their office to punish false witnesses, on the contrary seek them out, incite them to come and perjure themselves, and not only promise them impunity, but even rewards, if their deposition make it possible to pass sentence of death on Jesus. What a subversion of all order! What incredible malice!

O iniquitous judges! you seek false witness, and why? Ah! we know; it is because truthful witnesses would not depose against him whose unjust condemnation you desire; it is because only the most audacious falsehood can criminate him who is innocence, holiness itself; it is because you would fain give the greatest error that ever was, a semblance of truth; it is because you would veil under judicial forms the deicide you are about to commit; it is because you would first kill by calumny, in public estimation, him whom you want an excuse to deliver to the executioners; it is because the life of the Just One is displeasing to you, and you would fain persuade yourselves and others that he is not just.

Besides, your base act is written in the books of which you are the interpreters: "Unjust witnesses have risen up against me,"† said David, "the image of

* St. Matt., xxvi. 59.

† Ps., xxvi. 12.

the Messiah ;” “but,” he elsewhere says, “let my enemies be confounded and ashamed.”*

Now, this is precisely what happens at the tribunal of Caiaphas ; the evidence, far from establishing any facts against Jesus, does but reveal the infamous plot to which recourse has been had. Amongst so many calumniators not one can bring home to him even the slightest transgression ; many contradict what others have said ; and so this whole intrigue results only in manifesting the innocence of the Accused and the malice of his enemies.

“O triumph of the innocence of Jesus !” exclaims Origen ; “amid all these suborned witnesses, calumny finds not even the slightest thing to make use of against him !”

Nevertheless two witnesses present themselves, and affirm that he said : “I am able to destroy the temple of God, and in three days to rebuild it.”† This was a grave accusation, but it was also a false one ; and hence it is that the Gospel styles those who bore it, “false witnesses.”

It was grave, because it was meant to ruin Jesus in the opinion of the Jews, so jealous of the glory of their temple, and in whose eyes to speak against that edifice was to speak against the nation itself, of which it was, as it were, a symbol. In causing Jesus to be accused of having a design to destroy it, Caiaphas took therefore the most infallible means of prejudicing the people against the victim of his envy.

But this accusation was false ;—our divine Savior

* Ps., xxxix. 15 ; lxix. 3.

† St. Matt., xxvi. 61.

had said, speaking of his body, "destroy this temple :"* but, distorting the meaning of his words, they affirm that he said, "I will destroy this temple."—Thus, by a perfidious stratagem, they make him appear to have the intention of committing the sacrilege which was to be committed by the Jews themselves.

O perfidious judges ! do you not reflect that you are already fulfilling the first part of what he foretold, since, in conspiring to take his life, you labor to destroy his adorable body, that living temple wherein "dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head ?"†

Ah ! reflect you then, too, that he will accomplish the second part of his prophecy ; that he will restore that temple after three days, and that it shall be the sign of your ruin and your condemnation, as well as the cause of his glory and the source of his triumph. But, no ! blinded by your passions, you think only of carrying out your criminal design, to accomplish which you shrink from no crime, not even perjury.

For us, who contemplate our Savior and our God in presence of the iniquitous judges before whom he appeared, let us consider him, listening in silence to the accusations of his enemies, refuting not the calumnies wherewith they brand him, not even that whereby they render him odious to the people.

It would have been easy for him to establish his innocence directly ; for, had he wished it, the sick whom he had cured, the possessed whom he had delivered, the dead whom he had raised, the angels themselves, as well as the saints of the Old Law,—would have come

* St. John, ii. 19.

† Col., ii. 9.

forward to say to all the people : “ This is the Messiah, the Christ, Son of the living God.”

But such is not his will : he consents to pass for a malefactor, in order to expiate our sins of pride, our inordinate desire for the esteem of men. Standing before the tribunal of Caiaphas, he appears as though sunk in the most profound humiliation. He gives us at this moment a great example of patience and resignation ; his heart is breaking with grief on hearing the blasphemies of the infamous people who appear as witnesses ; but, always full of charity, it only inspires him to pity and to pray for them.

APPLICATION.

We make profession of being disciples of Jesus Christ ; let us, then, imitate him as perfectly as we can.

Contrary to the conduct of his enemies, let us only propose to ourselves a meritorious object ; let us seek only the glory of God and the salvation of souls ; let us act only through the pure motives of faith and charity ; let us employ only legitimate means, remembering that we are not allowed to do even the slightest evil, were it to result in the greatest good.

Let us take care of allowing ourselves, through envy or any other motive, to examine maliciously the actions of others. Let us be persuaded that it would be imitating the guilty Jews, and seeking witness against our brethren, in order to put them to death in our own estimation.

Let us adore Jesus Christ, holiness itself, a prey to calumny, and opposing thereto only silence, resignation,

and charity. Let us not be surprised if we chance to be the object of detraction ; let us only think of bearing it as true disciples of the divine Master.

PRAYER.

Is there any thing more admirable, O Jesus ! than the silence thou keepest whilst thine enemies calumniate thee, say all that is evil of thee, misconstrue thy words, and utter blasphemies that fill thy soul with grief ? Thou art as one deaf and dumb. And why, O Lord, dost thou act so ? Ah ! it is to teach me to bear with patience and resignation the contradictions, the reproaches, the malicious remarks, the false accusations which attack my reputation.

Give me, then, O my divine Master ! thy spirit of meekness, to the end that I may imitate thee in those so trying circumstances, and that I may be truly the disciple of him whom I so often invoke in these words : “ Jesus ! hated, calumniated, and persecuted, have mercy on us ! ”

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 389.)

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS CONDEMNED AT THE TRIBUNAL
OF CAIAPHAS.

“What think you ? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death.”—St. Matt., xxvi. 66.

CONSIDERATION.

THE false witnesses have borne testimony against Jesus, and he has heard their evidence without replying, and it is evidently of no value. Nevertheless, Caiaphas, desirous of turning it to account, interrogates the divine Prisoner concerning it, but he remains silent. Then, being exasperated, and determined to make him say something that might criminate him, he said to him: “Answerest thou nothing to the things which these witness against thee ?”*

Vain hope ! Jesus answers nothing ; what necessity was there for his refuting testimony that was clearly false or of no importance, and, moreover, contradictory ?

Caiaphas, and the doctors of the law, vexed to see all these diabolical expedients without effect, sought amongst themselves new stratagems to ensnare Jesus.

Unhappy men ! they understood not that failure in crime is a grace, and that if God permits nothing to prosper with them, it is because he wishes to open

* St. Matt. xxvi. 62.

their eyes and bring them back to the way of good. But alas! instead of yielding to the evidence of facts, they again seek means whereby to force the Savior to break at last that silence which disconcerts them.

Then Caiphas conceives the plan of adjuring him in the name of the living God, to tell if he is truly the Messiah. He hopes that he will not refuse to speak when formally commanded in the name of God, and by the supreme pontiff.

This project was sacrilegious and supremely iniquitous, since it was making use, as a means for crime, of the holy name of God, and the pontifical dignity; and, in order to succeed, the questioner counted on the religion even of him who was about to be put to death as wanting religion. They hope to ruin him by means of the infinite respect he has for the name of God: can anything more odious or more criminal be conceived?

The high priest then, rising up, said to him in a tone of authority: "I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God."*

The summons could not be more solemn, as neither could it be more perfidious:—if Jesus, who says he is the Messiah, denies that he is God, he will be convicted of having deceived the people; if he answer in the affirmative, he will be accused of blasphemy; he can, therefore, furnish only a sword for his executioners to immolate him, unless he answer in an evasive manner. But such is not now his intention. He will answer, because it is the head of the nation, it is the council of the ancients, it is the whole people to whom he was first

* St. Matt. xxvi. 63.

sent as ambassador, that summon him to declare plainly who he is ; besides, he thinks it a duty to himself, to the Church, and to us, to declare openly on this occasion that he is the Messiah, the Son of God.

But first he shows that he knows the secret intentions of Caiaphas, who interrogates him—not to know the truth, but merely to find an opportunity of condemning him—wherefore it is that he says ; “ If I shall tell you, you will not believe me . . . nor let me go,”* because I read in your heart that you have resolved, not to admit the truth which I am about to reveal, but to combat, and make a crime of it. I am going to answer, nevertheless, not because of your summons, the malice of which I know, but on account of God, in whose name you make it. Yea, thou hast said it, I am the Son of God.

O Jewish nation ! behold he declares himself the Christ sent by God ! “ How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense ? ”† hadst thou said to him. Well ! the moment is come when that suspense is to cease. The Messiah, the Son of God, is the Son of Man who is a prisoner, loaded with chains, and whose death you seek.

O unhappy people ! let not the state in which you see him, be to you a cause of scandal. Listen rather to the words he speaks, addressing Caiaphas and the whole assembly : “ You shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”‡ Thus this divine Savior transports the thoughts of all from the unworthy tri-

* St. Luke, xxii. 67, 68.

† St. John, x. 24.

‡ St. Mark, xiv. 62.

bunal before which he stands, to the judgment seat of God, where all injustice will be repaired; he reveals himself as the supreme arbiter who shall one day decide the fate of his judges themselves.

Jesus has then declared that he is the son of God, and he has done so to render homage to truth, to glorify his Father, to edify his Church. He knows that it will cost him his life, but he has not hesitated. Let us then adore in him, Christian souls! the chief of the martyrs appearing before the first persecutors, entering on the career in which he shall be followed by millions of the faithful, who will confess that he is truly the Son of God, although that declaration is to draw down upon them the most rigorous torments and the most cruel death.

As soon as Caiaphas has heard the reply of Jesus, he makes a show of hypocritical indignation; he rends his garments, and cries out: "He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses?"* And the whole assembly decrees that Jesus is deserving of death.

O iniquitous sentence! Jesus is condemned because he has said: "I am the son of God." But before pronouncing against him, have they examined whether his wisdom is not divine, whether his works are not supernatural, whether his power has not shown itself infinitely superior to that of men and to that of hell? Have they opened the prophecies to study whether they do not tell that he is to be in the state to which he is reduced? The devils themselves have confessed his divinity;† and the people,—the depository of the

* St. Matt. xxvi. 65.

† St. Luke, iv. 41.

promises concerning his coming—accuse him of blasphemy when they hear him proclaim that he is the Son of God !

Caiaphas, the chief priests, the doctors of the law, have the Messiah before them, and they refuse to acknowledge him. But, O judgment of God ! by the fact of their criminal obstinacy, they cease to be the true interpreters of the law, which was given especially to make the Messiah known to men ; the high priest, by rending his garments, signified his degradation and that of the other ministers of the figurative religion. “ At this moment,” says St. Hilary, “ the priesthood of Aaron ceases, and that of Jesus Christ is established, the law disappears before the Gospel, the veil of the Scriptures, figured by the sacerdotal garments, is rent before the majesty of the Christian religion.”

APPLICATION.

Let us courageously confess by our words, and still more by our actions, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that we believe in him, that we are really Christians ; and, regardless of the troubles and persecutions that this conduct may draw upon us, let us manifest our belief when the glory of God and our neighbor's good require it.

Let not the sight of our Savior humbled stagger our faith ; let us think only that he whom we contemplate weak, captive, despised, is now glorious in heaven, whence he shall come to judge all mankind.

Let us be zealous in announcing to those who are under our charge, that Jesus is the Son of God, the

object worthy of all our love, the foundation of our hope.

Let us console ourselves for the ingratitude of men, if we experience it; let it not even surprise us: Jesus had done good to all those with whom he came in contact; now, in the great council of the nation, no one declares for him; all the members present in the assembly pronounce him deserving of death; is it fitting that we should be treated better than our divine Master? . . .

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PRAYER.

I salute thee, and bless thee, O Jesus, King of martyrs! thou who wast sacrificed by the Jews for having said; "I am the Son of God:" that people would not acknowledge thee; but thou hast called us Christians, especially us religious, and thou hast said to us in the depth of our hearts those same words which we have believed through thy grace and thy mercy. Augment in us, O sweet Savior! faith in thy divine teachings and hope in thy promises, to the end that, animated by the most ardent charity, we may be of the number of thy friends on the day of thy glorious coming in the clouds of heaven, when thou shalt come to exercise all justice, and thyself reward all those who shall have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 389.)

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS ABUSED AND INSULTED IN THE
HOUSE OF CAIAPHAS.

“They spat in his face, and buffeted him, and others struck his face with the palms of their hands.”—St. Matt., xxvi. 67.

CONSIDERATION.

CAIAPHAS, and the council over which he presides, have decreed Jesus worthy of death. They agree to assemble again, at the dawn of day, to follow up the affair, and retire to take some hours' rest, leaving servants to keep guard on the innocent victim of their envy.

These hirelings know too well the dispositions of their masters, to content themselves with guarding Jesus: they propose to themselves to have some amusement at his expense. Certain of impunity, or rather, counting on the approbation of Caiaphas, they carry out their intention, and lead Jesus into the vestibule, where they make him undergo all that the malice of their heart can suggest, all that insolence and cruelty combined can do.

Oh! what a sight! The Master of Heaven serves as pastime for wretches! He whom the angels adore trembling, is the butt of low and cruel pleasantry! Who could tell what he endures from them! New Philistines, they torment in a thousand ways the true Samson,

delivered into their hands by the synagogue; they fulfilled what had been foretold of the Savior by the prophet Jeremiah, saying: "He shall give his cheek to him that striketh him; he shall be filled with reproaches."*

And first, they insult him by words, treat him as a dolt, a fool, renew the accusations of the false witnesses, and belch forth all sorts of blasphemies and imprecations against him. Then they spit in his face, thus accomplishing what he had foretold by Isaiah, saying: "I have not turned away my face from them that spit upon me,"† and what he had foretold himself by his apostles.‡

What torture! Can we conceive a greater mark of contempt, a more outrageous insult, more humiliating treatment? . . . O adorable face of my Jesus, splendor of eternal light, mirror of God's majesty! Thou, the object of Mary's contemplation, who makest the joy and happiness of the angels, I see thee defiled with spittle, treated with the utmost dignity! . . .

O mystery of iniquity on the part of men, but mystery of love on the part of Jesus, who offers for our salvation this excess of humiliation!

The people to whom he hath delivered himself through goodness to us, obeying the inspirations of the devil, continue to exercise upon him all the cruelties suggested by the hatred and envy wherewith they are animated.

Speaking by the prophet Isaiah, the son of God said: "I have given my body to the strikers and my

* Lament., iii. 30.

† Isa., l. 6.

‡ St. Mark, x. 34.

cheeks to them that plucked them.”* Now it is that he suffers this torture. . . The wretches to whom he is abandoned, dare to lay sacrilegious hands upon him. They strike him hard, then burst into peals of derisive laughter; they slap and buffet him, they pull his hair and his beard.

Let us contemplate, with throbbing hearts and tearful eyes, the barbarous sport of those cruel men! Let us behold every soldier, every servant, making himself a tormentor of the divine victim, paying him his tribute of contempt and ill usage, one trying to outvie the other in insult and outrage!

The Christ of God, the eternal priest, made the butt of ruffians! Insult is heaped upon him without measure. Never was any creature, however vile he might be, treated with so much ignominy as was the Master of the world in that dark hour.

And yet he is consumed with love even for those who outrage him. “He casts upon them,” says St. Chrysostom, “looks so mild, so affectionate, that their hearts might have been softened.” But these wretches put a bandage over his eyes, and so provide against any feeling of compassion.

In their impious audacity, they scoff at his character of prophet, and show that they consider him only as an impostor. They surround him, and some of them striking him, say: “Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee!”†

Great God, to what abasement is thine adorable Son reduced! He to whom nothing is hidden, is told to

* Isa., l. 6.

† St. Matt., xxvi. 68.

guess who struck him ! The name of Christ is only given him in sacrilegious mockery.

Ah ! you do not believe in him—you who insult him cruelly—and yet your very insults have been witness of his divinity, for he foretold them. Did he not say by David ? “ I have become the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people ; all they that saw me have laughed me to scorn.”* Did he not say by Job ? “ They have struck me on the cheek ; they are filled with my pains.”†

You are obeying, it is true, the hatred of the Pharisees, and the rage of hell ; and, nevertheless, you are concurring in the accomplishment of his merciful designs.

Yes, it is his mercy and his love for us that have reduced him to the ignominious state in which we contemplate him. Ah ! if we understood this, would we not love him with our whole heart ? Would we not be animated with the liveliest and the most constant gratitude to him ?

APPLICATION.

Let us love Jesus who has loved us even to sacrificing for us his honor and his life. If he endures all the opprobrium that is heaped upon him, it is to expiate our sins, much as they are in contempt of God, or of his adorable person and his holy doctrine. Let us hate sin, and avoid it. Let us think that, in regard to Jesus, it is an outrage infinitely more painful to his divine heart than was the cruel mockery of the satellites of Caiaphas.

* Ps., xxi. 7, 8.

† Job, xvi. 11.

Let us, therefore, deplore our past transgressions; let us propose to ourselves never more to commit them, and take the necessary means.

Let us attach ourselves with our whole soul to our generous Redeemer, remembering that he humbled himself even to annihilation, to deliver us from the eternal disgrace we have merited.

Let us learn from the example of Jesus Christ to bear with injuries, to practise patience, humility, and self-denial.

We are his disciples: let us, then, imitate him. By times we are discouraged on account of a humiliation, a contradiction. Ah! let us compare what we have to suffer with what he suffered for us, and blush for shame for having so small a share in the bitter cup he drank for us to the very dregs.

We have considered him filled with reproach, covered with ignominy, given up to all sorts of torments: could we, then, desire to be honored by men, to love glory? or could we even seek our ease and the gratification of our sensuality? No, no! . . . After the contemplation we have made, we should have but one desire, that of making ourselves like to our divine Master.

Let us often make him reparation for the outrages he underwent during his passion, and especially for those we have ourselves inflicted on him by our sins. Let us repair, as far as it depends on us, the blasphemies of the Jews in his regard, and those which impiety belches forth in our days against him.

Let us further draw as fruit from this meditation, to respect our neighbor, to do nothing but what is charita-

ble towards him—for, in the eyes of faith, our neighbor is Jesus Christ—to insult, mock, despise him, is to insult, mock, despise that divine Savior himself.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! equally adorable in the midst of the Jews, who insult and abuse thee, and in heaven, where the angels prostrate themselves in thy presence, we bless thee for thy patience during thy sufferings, and for the love which made thee accept so much contempt, in order to merit for us to adore thee one day in glory.

Vouchsafe, O my Jesus! to hear my prayer: since thou turnest not thy face from an ungrateful people who dishonor thee, turn it not away from a sinner who has also often outraged thee, but who at this moment has no other desire than to venerate thee as profoundly as do the angels in heaven, and who urgently implores thy grace!

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 390.)

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.
 ON ST. PETER'S DENIAL.

“Even this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.”—St. Mark, xiv. 30.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider with terror the frightful fall of the prince of the apostles, even three times denying his divine Master—even three times, as he himself had foretold.

After supper, when he instituted the adorable sacrament of his body, that divine Savior said to him: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren.”* “Simon Peter sayeth to him: ‘Lord, whither goest thou?’ Jesus answered: ‘Whither I go thou canst not follow me; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.’ Peter sayeth to him: ‘Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee.’ Jesus answered him: ‘Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Amen, Amen, I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny me thrice.’”†

Speaking to all the apostles, he told them: “All you shall be scandalized in me this night, for it is written,

* St. Luke, xxii. 31, 32.

† St. John, xiii. 36–38.

‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed.’ ‘Though all men shall be scandalized in thee,’ Peter answered ‘I will never be scandalized.’”*

Jesus repeats the prediction he had made ; but Peter replies again : “ Lord I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death.”† Insisting still more strongly, he said : “ Though I should die with thee, I shall not deny thee.”‡

In the garden of Olives, Jesus had recommended his apostles, and particularly St. Peter, to watch and pray that they might not enter into temptation, reminding them that the spirit is willing, the flesh weak.

The presumptuous apostle, who had protested his fidelity with so much energy, understands not that he can ever cease to acknowledge his divine Master ; he seeks not in prayer the strength that was necessary for him, but which he did not think he required. So God abandons him to his apparent courage, or rather to his real weakness ; he leaves him to his own strength, which could not but fail him in the moment of trial, for, without the assistance of grace, man has only the power of ruining himself.

Jesus is soon apprehended by his enemies. Peter at first takes up his defence, and strikes one of the high priest’s people, then he flies with the other apostles.

It is true, he retraces his steps ; but how unlike himself he already is ! “ Generous as he had been in promises,” says St. Augustine, “ he shows himself as timid

* St. Matt., xxvi. 31, 33.

† St. Luke, xxii. 33.

‡ St. Matt., xxvi. 35.

now when danger is come ;” he follows Jesus, but afar off, as the Gospel likewise remarks. It is, therefore, with an irresolute and fear-stricken heart that he reaches the house of Caiaphas. He goes in without suspecting the peril he is to encounter ; he takes no precaution, and seating himself with the servants and officers near the fire that had been made, he warms himself while waiting to see how the affair would end.

A servant maid looks at him attentively, and thinks she recognizes him by the light of the fire at which he is warming himself. “Art not thou,” said she aloud, “one of this man’s disciples ? Thou also wert with Jesus of Nazareth.” At these words he is confounded ; his courage forsakes him : “Woman,” says he, speaking loud enough to be heard by all, “I know him not.”* “I neither know nor understand what thou sayest.”†

O weakness, O cowardice ! O falsehood ! Of what is man not capable when abandoned to himself ! . . . O Jesus, how must this denial have touched thy tender heart ! Thou hadst given Peter so many marks of particular affection ! Thou hadst distinguished him amongst all, thou hadst chosen him for the head of thy Church ; and thou seest him, alas ! succumb to the first trial, deny thee for his Master, apostatize, and that at the voice of a servant maid ! Ah ! who shall tell us what thou didst suffer, and how much thou didst desire that thine apostle should depart quickly from that house which was for him an occasion of sin !

But Peter still remains in the vestibule ; alas ! a

* St. Luke, xxii. 57.

† St. Mark, xiv. 68.

moment after, he denies his Master for the second time and confirms his words with an oath ; then, a little later, for the third time, and with an imprecation he swears that he knows not the man.

Oh ! how fast we go down in the depths of evil ! Peter, who is now perjured, was at first only presumptuous, negligent in praying, then he showed himself cowardly in following Jesus, then rash, throwing himself without precaution into the occasion of sin ; and when the moment of trial is come, he feels his imaginary strength departing from him, he begins to be ashamed of his Master ; he declares that he knows him not, even that he never knew him. Then, not content with mere denial, he has recourse to swearing ; in order to deceive more surely, he takes care not to mention this name of him whom he denies : “ I know not the man,” says he, “ of whom you speak.”*

O Peter, what sayest thou ? what ! thou knowest not the man ? And he is thy Redeemer, thy Savior, thy God ! Thou knowest not the man ? Thou hast, then, forgotten thine own words ; thou no longer rememberest the testimony thou didst bear to him, saying, in the name of all the disciples : “ Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God ;† . . . Thou hast the words of eternal life ! ”‡

Thou knowest not the man ? But it is he who, by his power, made thee walk on the waters, and held out his hand to thee to prevent thee from being engulfed in the waves ; it is he by whom didst make that miracu-

* St. Mark, xiv. 71.

† St. Matt., xvi. 16.

‡ St. John, vi. 69.

lous draught of fish which excited the admiration of thyself and those who were with thee ; it is he who, at thy request, cured thy mother-in-law ; it is he whom thou sawest radiant with glory on Thabor, and of whom the Eternal Father spoke when he told thee, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ! " * it is that divine Master who has loved thee so much ! Ah ! should he have expected this outrage ?

Let us not content ourselves with deploring the fall of the prince of the apostles ; let us draw a usefull esson from it. And first let us be well persuaded that we are only weakness, and that what happened to St. Peter may, with greater probability, happen to ourselves. Let us not be presumptuous, therefore ; let us fear for ourselves : if the just fell, would it not be folly for the sinner to count on himself ?

Peter fell because he neglected vigilance and prayer : let us, therefore, understand what power the devil's temptations have over the tepid soul, who neglects to watch over herself and pray.

Peter fell for having kept company with the wicked ; let us learn to shun the world, to fly those persons who may withdraw us from God, to dwell in retirement, to detach ourselves, as far as possible, even from our brothers if they are not regular : human respect is a terrible weapon which makes every day thousands of apostates.

The head of the Church fell for having imprudently cast himself into the occasion of sinning : what precautions should we not take, — we, frail reeds, who are shaken by the first breath of temptation !

* St. Matt., xvii. 5.

Let us, then, withdraw ourselves promptly from all that might tend to our spiritual ruin, or be even simply a cause of moral decay. Let us understand well that he who exposes himself to danger, shall perish therein; that in dangerous occasions, the mind is disturbed, the heart enervated, seduction becomes stronger and stronger, and we soon give way. Alas! how many times have we not had deplorable experience of this!

PRAYER.

I know, O my God! that man has in himself neither light enough to know the truth, nor strength enough to practise virtue; abandoned to his own resources, he is sure to perish. Hence it is that I have recourse to thee, and I beseech thee not to leave me to myself. I deplore in thy presence all the wanderings of my life, and I beg of thee, through the intercession of the prince of the apostles, the two graces thou didst bestow on him—that of offending thee no more, and that of bewailing my sins till the moment when mine eyes shall close on the light of time to open on the light of eternity.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 390.)

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

CONVERSION AND PENANCE OF ST. PETER.

“Immediately, . . . the cock crew; and the Lord, turning, looked on Peter. . . . And Peter went out and wept bitterly.”—St. Luke, xxii. 60–62.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider with affright into what an abyss the prince of the apostles fell: he, admitted to the contemplation of the greatest mysteries, honored with the most intimate confidence, and the object of the most tender affection of Jesus!—behold how, all at once, he has been ashamed to have him for a master, and denied him as though that adorable Savior had been the vilest of men; and after having, by a celestial revelation, clearly recognized and confessed him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God! Oh! what scandal for the other disciples! What triumph for the Jews! Alas! who would have thought of such faithlessness!

But let us consider with the liveliest emotion the infinite goodness of Jesus towards him; ah! it is here, indeed, that the abyss of sin has called forth the abyss of mercy!

The crowing of the cock is heard, and that first warning has no effect on St. Peter's soul; it is heard again, after the third denial, then the Apostle remembers the prediction which had been made to him, but is not

yet converted: for that a particular and very powerful grace is required, and this grace Jesus grants him. "The Lord turning," says the Gospel, "looked on Peter."*

In these words is contained the whole history of the mercy of God; that look of kindness which they recall, is the luminous light which shows Peter the precipice down which he has fallen; it is the hand of the charitable guide who places him again in the way from which he had wandered. The look of Jesus is not a look of disdain, but of love and compassion.

O Peter! Jesus loves you still, although you have denied him, and have outraged him in a more sensible manner than Caiaphas and his officers. He loves you, and hence it is that he looks upon you with that look which penetrates hearts, and is to you the grace to which you are to owe your salvation.

A look changes Peter guilty into Peter repentant; it is for him a mirror wherein he sees himself all defiled with sin, and in a shameful condition. By that look, Jesus says to him: "And thou, too, Simon, son of Jonas, thou deniest and insultest me!" By that look, he shows him his divine heart, then drowned in tears, pierced with many swords, amongst which Peter recognizes that wherewith he himself has struck him.

He then comprehends what his crime is; but he also comprehends that the divine Savior loves him still and calls him to him; he is at once humbled by his sin and sustained by grace, desolate and confident, ashamed and eager to return to him whom he has had the mis-

* St. Luke, xxii. 61.

fortune to offend: dead by pride and presumption, he is raised again by a look of pity.

Jesus looked on Peter, "and Peter went out, and wept bitterly."* Such are the effects of grace on sinners who, like St. Peter, should try to correspond with it, bewail their faults, and withdraw themselves quickly from dangerous occasions.

Peter hastens to fly from a house which had been so fatal to him, waiting till it pleases God to furnish him with the means of repairing, later, the scandal he has given; he departs quickly from the occasion of sin, and in that, he performs an eminent act of wisdom,—the one by which every sincere conversion ought to begin.

But Peter does not stop there: he gives up his heart to the sorrow with which his fault inspires him, and sheds torrents of tears.

Oh! flow, flow in abundance, tears of that illustrious penitent! you are for him the saving water which purifies him and restores to his soul its former beauty; by you he is entitled to the effects of the mercy of God and the esteem of men.

The tears of the repentant sinner call forth the tears of thy compassion, O Jesus! and thy compassion is for him the forgetting of his fault, the pardon of his crime, his re-installment in his privileges, a place in thy generous heart, ever full of charity. Thou rejectest not a contrite heart which returns to thee, especially when its conversion bears such marks as those on which we are meditating.

The conversion of St. Peter is prompt: at the first

* St. Luke, xxii. 62.

look of Jesus, he re-enters into himself, deploras his misfortune, and places no object between the view of his crime and his repentance. His conversion is prudent: he hastens to fly the occasion of sin, he departs quickly from those whose company was injurious to him. His conversion is sincere; tears flow from his eyes, but they have their source in his desolate heart. He says nothing, because a great grief is always silent; but his tears speak aloud, and procure him the efficacy of a new baptism. His sorrow is lasting; evermore penetrated with confusion, he ceases not to groan over his sin. Each night, at cock-crow, as St. Clement attests, he arose to weep for his infidelity and to ask pardon of Jesus Christ; and that mortification he continued all the rest of his life. His sorrow was at once so great and so persevering, that his tears, says Nicephorus, formed furrows, as it were, along his cheeks.

His conversion is fervent:—"The motive which makes him shed tears," says St. Chrysostom, "is not the fear of the punishment he has deserved, it is the regret for having offended his God, for having denied his adorable Master, for whom he has so lively an affection:"—his heart is at once touched with sorrow and penetrated with love: his sorrow inspires him with contrition for his sin, and makes him endure a martyrdom more painful, perhaps, than the martyrdom of blood he was one day to undergo; his love excites his confidence, obtains for him the assistance of grace, and makes him find, in his tears, ineffable consolation.

APPLICATION.

And we, too, have had, like St. Peter, the misfortune of offending Jesus, and on us, too, that divine Savior has cast a look of love and purity. Well! have we, like the prince of the apostles, corresponded with the favor bestowed upon us?

Have we hastened to fly the occasions of sin? Have we placed our faults before our eyes, to be the subject of our confusion? Have we wept them sincerely and constantly? Have we wept, and do we still weep, for them from a motive of love? Are our tears abundant? St. Peter fell but on one occasion, and he wept his misfortune all his lifetime: can we, then, cease to mourn—we who have so many times fallen so grievously! “Come, let us weep before the Lord that made us;” * let us weep always, because he is our Father, our friend, and because it shall always be true to say that we have offended him.

O tears of St. Peter! O profound sorrow! O sincere conversion! O model of repentance! how you condemn our superficial sorrow, our imperfect conversions, our defective penance, our momentary sighs and tears!

Ah! let us, then, re-enter seriously into ourselves, let us excite ourselves to true contrition; let us have recourse to him whom we have offended: our sins are our own work, but repentance is that of grace on condition we co-operate therewith. Let us ask with fervor that grace which will make us return to God by way of sorrow, after having withdrawn ourselves from him by the way of infidelity.

* Ps., xciv. 6.

PRAYER.

Behold me in thy presence, O Jesus ! confused and humbled for my sins ; yes, I know thou hast regarded me with the same look of salvation wherewith thou didst regard St. Peter ; thou hast reproached me with my wanderings, and hast excited me to go to thee by repentance.

But, Lord ! have I corresponded with that grace ? After having imitated thine apostle in his wandering, have I imitated him in his repentance ? Has my conversion the marks of his ? Is it sincere ? efficacious ? persevering ? Is it inspired by love rather than fear ?

I know not, my God ! but thou knowest, thou who knowest all things.

Ah ! if at this moment, I am not wholly thine, if sin yet dwells within me, regard me a second time, I beseech thee, with a look of love and pity ; open to my heart the precious source of the most abundant graces, that they may open to my eyes an inexhaustible source of tears !

My tears shall obtain for me, through the merits of thy precious blood, that thou wilt forget my iniquities, and re-instate me in thy friendship and in the privileges of thy children.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 391.)

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

JESUS SHUT UP IN A DUNGEON.

“They humbled his feet in fetters; the iron pierced his soul.”
—Ps., civ. 18.

CONSIDERATION.

ST. BONAVENTURE and several other fathers of the Church, assert that the soldiers and servants of the high priest, tired at last of tormenting Jesus, and wishing to take some rest, agreed amongst themselves to shut him up, bound hand and foot in a dark and narrow dungeon, situated near the high priest's hall of audience.

Let us contemplate, then, Christian souls, our beloved Savior suffering this new indignity, and let us fathom, as far as possible, the ocean of grief in which his soul is engulfed. Let us behold him in the hands of the ruffians who have cruelly mocked him, who have heaped upon him all the outrages that malice can suggest, and who wreaked their infernal fury upon his adorable person. For a moment they pause, but immediately return to him: they bind him closely, they drag him to his prison, the door of which they open; they violently thrust him into that hideous den, so low and so narrow that he can neither remain standing, nor take any rest.

There it is that this adorable Savior, exhausted with fatigue, his soul plunged in the deepest sorrow, passed

the rest of that night, waiting till the great council should assemble anew to confirm the sentence already pronounced, and to deliver him into the hands of the governor.

O Jesus, most amiable Lord! were thy enemies then to add this outrage to so many others? The Just by excellence is imprisoned like a criminal; it is on the Holy of Holies and the Master of the world that the walls of a narrow dungeon close; space is measured out to him who has sown worlds in space, and who has immensity for an attribute!

What a mystery of iniquity! what a subversion of all order!

Behold, Christian souls! in what a state your adorable Master finds himself; his body is bruised with blows, his face is covered with spittle, a cold sweat bedews his forehead: he is weak, overcome with fatigue, exhausted, and almost dying. What need he has of charitable assistance! but no one gives it. He is a prisoner, and no one visits him. His heart is sad and desolate, and no word consoles him, no hand dries his tears.

He is chained in a dark den, where he cannot even lie on the ground; and that is the bed of rest which the synagogue has prepared for him!

Ah! could he have expected to be treated thus by the daughter of Sion, he, the King who came to her full of goodness and meekness,—who is really what she herself has acknowledged and proclaimed of him on many occasions—her sovereign Lord!

O crime! O injustice! He has come unto his kingdom, and his own subjects have given him a prison for his

palace, while waiting to be enabled to give him an ignominious cross for his throne!

But, Lord! art thou not the all-powerful God? Why, then, dost thou let thyself be dragged into that narrow dungeon? Why allow thyself to be treated as a malefactor, thou who art holiness itself? At this moment men and beasts are reposing after the labors of the day, and repairing their strength by sleep—why dost thou not rest? why dost thou continue to suffer?

Ah! I understand, adorable Savior! at this moment, through love for us, thou art negotiating our interests with thy Father; thou art expiating the sins we have committed by an abuse of our liberty; thou art satisfying for our crimes, whereby we deserve to be cast, bound hand and foot, into the eternal prison, where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth, devouring flames and cries of despair.

At this moment, thou art meriting for the martyrs and confessors of the faith the grace to bear patiently the pains and the weariness of the prison, and to persevere till death in fidelity to thy holy law; thou declarest thyself their chief and their model, and givest them the most powerful motives for consolation.

Oh! but their imprisonment shall appear mild and the chains light, when they remember that thou hast deigned to be imprisoned and loaded with irons for our sake.

At this moment, thou also givest us the example of the greatest resignation and the most generous forgetfulness of injuries; thou dost in prison—what soon thou shalt do publicly on the cross—thou prayest even for

those who persecute thee with so much cruelty and malice, and already thou sayest : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. ”*

APPLICATION.

After having contemplated our divine Master in such a state of pain and suffering, can we henceforth complain of wanting anything, of being ill lodged or ill provided for ? Ah ! if we every evening, beside our bed, recall to our minds the place of rest which the Jews gave Jesus, should we not be ashamed of seeing ourselves, wretched sinners as we are, infinitely better treated than he ?

Would not the thought of Jesus Christ imprisoned for our sake, make it easy for us to bear the contradictions, the injuries, the persecutions even, of which we may be the objects ?

What, then ! the God of all grandeur and of all holiness consents, in order to deliver us from everlasting imprisonment, to be chained and cast into a miserable den ; and we, who call him our Master—we would fain suffer nothing, and murmur at the least trial ! Oh ! how unworthy we should be of the name of Christians, so glorious for us to bear !

Jesus is in our hearts, principally when we have the happiness of receiving holy Communion ; but is he not there as in a prison, hindered by our indifference, our self-love, our tepidity, from acting freely to sanctify us, and to make of us generous souls for his service ? Is not his grace, his word, imprisoned within us, and reduced to impotence by the effect of our perverse or irresolute will ?

* St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

Jesus Christ was cast into prison, and whilst he was there, he was forgotten and outraged by the world ; but is it not the same even now ? Behold him in the holy tabernacle, bound, as it were, by indissoluble chains of love, outwardly reduced to the most absolute impotence ; he is there in the august Sacrament which he instituted on the eve of his death, and he is forgotten there, alas ! by the greater number of men, and outraged by many.

Ah ! what a subject of sorrow for all faithful hearts ! what a motive for prostrating ourselves in his holy presence, and making him honorable reparation !

PRAYER.

Permit us to cast ourselves at thy feet, august prisoner ! who, by an effect of thy infinite charity, hast shut thyself up in our holy tabernacles : yes, permit us to offer thee the homage of our hearts. The world discovers, and even insults thee, in the sacrament of thy love ; but we, thy privileged disciples and thy children, we bless thee, and pray thee to accept, in reparation of its indifference towards thee, our most tender affections, our protestations of fidelity.

Help us, O Lord ! to repay thee love for love ; ah ! may we, by a conduct worthy of our vocation, cause thee to forget all we have made thee suffer by our sins, and especially this torment of thy imprisonment, occasioned by the bad use we make of our liberty.

O Jesus ! who dost satisfy for us the justice of thy Father, be thou ever blessed for thy goodness in making thyself a slave to procure for us the liberty

of thy children, and grant that we may not lose it by sin.

O Mary ! by thine anguish during that night on which Jesus was cast into a dungeon, we conjure thee to pray for us, in order to obtain for us the grace of never more offending thy divine Son, our beloved Lord, whom we desire to praise, love, bless, and glorify for ever !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 391.)

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

JESUS IS BROUGHT BEFORE PILATE.

“They brought him bound, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor.”—St. Matt., xxvii. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

THE last night of Jesus on earth in his passion state is ended :—the memorable night on which he instituted the Sacrament of his love, and gave to men the most salutary teachings ; but also the night of sorrow when the powers of darkness were all potent against him, and treated him with the most revolting cruelty.

The day begins, and it is that of the greater pains and death of the Man-God. All the torments he has already suffered are to be renewed, and multiplied more and more, and in the most humiliating manner :—Jews and Gentiles, priests and magistrates, all are to concur in aggravating his sufferings.

The chief priests being unable, by themselves, to have the sentence of death which they had passed on Jesus, executed, hasten in the morning to assemble at the house of Caiaphas, to devise means for having it confirmed by Pontius Pilate. Those unhappy men, understanding perfectly that the charge brought by the witness they had suborned, would not produce a sufficient effect on the governor's mind, agreed among

themselves to bring Jesus before him as a seditious character, an enemy of Cæsar, a man who aspired to royalty, and who, for that end, sought to make a party for himself among the people.

O perfidy on the part of the chiefs of the synagogue! To damage Jesus in the eyes of his fellow-citizens, they reproach him with pretended religious misdemeanors; falsely accuse him of having spoken ill of the law and the Temple; and to have him condemned to death by Pilate, they propose to accuse him of being a seditious person and a disturber of public order, wanting to be made king, and, finally, of having forbidden the paying of tribute to Cæsar! Thus it is that they change at will the subject of their calumnies.

They hope to influence the governor, and obtain from him not only the confirmation of the decree already given, but a new sentence of death, which emanating entirely from the Roman authority, would not make themselves odious, and which, condemning Jesus to crucifixion, would deprive him of all honor and esteem in the eyes of the people.

Such are the motives on which the Jews act—criminal, odious, iniquitous motives, revealing souls wholly under the influence of the spirit of malice. But let us turn our minds from them to those on which our divine Savior acts. He also has reasons for being brought before Pilate's tribunal:—Savior of all men, it is his will that Jews and Gentiles concur in the immolation of the victim of their salvation; he desires by an effect of his infinite love, to suffer outrages from all nations; he desires, also, to die the kind of death he announced

when he said, "The Son of man shall be delivered to the Gentiles to be crucified.* . . . And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself."† Thus he makes the cruelty and malice of the Jews serve for the execution of his designs.

Let us contemplate, then, our amiable Redeemer, led once more through the streets of Jerusalem, closely bound, surrounded with armed men, preceded by the chief priests and the doctors of the law, followed by a tumultuous mob, who consider him only as a blasphemer, an enemy of their nation and of the holy temple.

Calumny has turned every heart away from him : hence they fear not to take him in the open day, assured that there will be no popular sympathy manifested on his behalf, now that he has been made odious to the people.

Oh ! how humiliating to him is this journey ! What shame he feels !

He is dragged with a cord around his neck along the streets of Jerusalem, every step of which he had marked with prodigies ; the people who had so often greeted him with acclamation, and who, a few days before, accompanied him singing his praises, now insult and outrage him, clamoring for his death ; those who are near him insult him, to render him more and more an object of contempt, and load him with maledictions.

The more the crowd swells, the more the fury against him increases, the more all manner of outrages is multiplied.

Behold, Christian souls, in what a state your Savior

* St. Matt., xx. 19.

† St. John, xii. 32.

is! he is truly the “man of sorrows,”* and becoming more and more “the outcast of the people,”† and the object of their derision; he is truly the divine Lamb, abandoned to the fury of wolves, and remaining ever mild and full of sweetness. Oh! bear him company in this journey so ignominious for him, and by thy respectful homage, by thy sincere adoration, try to make him forget the insults and outrages of which he is the object, and which, at bottom, he suffers only for your sake, and because he wills it.

Do not content yourself with contemplating his trials, his sufferings, his exterior humiliations, but think it is for you he has reduced himself to this state; enter, then, into his heart, see what anguish and dejection he feels, and yet what his resignation is in his sufferings, and his charity for his enemies:—they all curse him, while dragging him before the governor’s tribunal; but he answers their outrages only by offering up his sufferings to his Father for them, and praying him to forgive them.

APPLICATION.

Let us excite our hearts to lively sentiments of compassion, while considering what Jesus suffers for us.

Can we remain cold, hard, and insensible, while contemplating so many sorrows? Can the sight of our beloved Savior, buffeted, despised, rejected by all his people, led in chains before the judge who is to condemn him, fail to penetrate us to the depth of our soul? Oh!

* Isa., liii. 3.

† Ps., xxi. 7.

why should we, then, show so little love for that divine Redeemer ?

Let us make him honorable amends for all he suffered in the streets of Jerusalem ; let us try to glorify him as much as he was then despised.

Let us adore the terrible judgments of God, being executed on the Jewish nation by the Jews themselves : the divine Word is come to them, full of grace and truth ; he is come to be their life, their salvation, and their glory ; and the Jews reject him with contempt and give him up to the idolaters, without suspecting that they are committing suicide towards themselves, and are making over to a new people their right to the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Let the thought of Jesus dragged through Jerusalem, occupy our mind when we pass along the streets of the cities where we are employed ; let us be modest there ; let us bear willingly the contempt and the insults to which we may be subjected. What are these, compared with the affronts and the bad treatment endured for us by Jesus, our head and our model ? Would it not be feeling ashamed to resemble him, did we shrink from them ? Would it not be refusing to be his disciples ?

Let the thought of Jesus, humbled, annihilated, lead us then to the practice of humility : alas ! we are always afraid of being despised, condemned by men,—is that the feeling that ought to be in us ? A Christian should only fear not to be found conformable to Jesus ; and he ought to esteem nothing more than whatever may help him to become like unto that divine model.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! whom I contemplate ignominiously dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, grant me to enter into the spirit of this mystery, which is, on thy part, a mystery of love, and on that of thine enemies, a mystery of iniquity. Grant that, understanding how much thou hast loved us, I may love thee, in return, with all my heart, and with all my strength : and grant also, that comprehending in like manner all the heinousness of the conduct of the Jews, I may have a horror of envy, hatred, and all the evil passions which animated them, and which alas ! still live in me.

I accept, in union with thee, O my Jesus ! all the humiliations, all the contempt of which I may be the object : happy if, imitating thee in thy humility and thy resignation, I may obtain not to be, at the moment of my death, dragged by devils to the foot of thy tribunal.

Oh ! grant I beseech thee by all thou hast suffered, that I may be conducted thither by my holy angel guardian, who will ask and obtain for me a sentence of mercy.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 392.)

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

DESPAIR OF JUDAS.

“I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.”—
St. Matt., xxvii. 4.

CONSIDERATION.

IT seems, from the expressions used in the holy Gospel, that Judas had not calculated all the consequences of his crime; perhaps he had imagined that Jesus would defend himself before his judges, or that, by some act of his power, he might escape from the hands of his enemies and recover his liberty, whilst he should have none the less the price of his treason: but he cannot remain under that delusion, now that he sees him condemned by the council of the nation and brought before Pilate's tribunal.

Oh! what torments he endures! For him, it is hell beginning; a gloomy sadness veils his brow, his look is restless and wandering, his step hurried; a prey to remorse, he acts as if he bore a consuming fire within him; he wanders on all sides without finding rest.

A new Cain, he, too, hears the terrible words: “What hast thou done with thy brother? Judas, what hast thou done with Jesus? The blood of the new Abel ascends to heaven, and accuses thee before me.”

More and more agitated, the wretch replies as Cain

had done before: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon."* I have betrayed innocent blood, all is lost for me;—and he thinks he hears distinctly the sentence pronounced against the first fratricide, "Cursed shalt thou be."† Then his agitation is redoubled; it seems to him that he is marked on the forehead with a distinctive mark; he suffers unspeakable tortures.

O sad example of the deceptions experienced by the wicked! Judas had doubtless promised himself precious advantages from his treason; he hoped that the thirty pieces for which he delivered up Jesus, would procure him some enjoyment. Alas! scarcely has he them in his possession when he feels pain on pain, and they appear to him as a crushing weight, or rather as burning coals of fire.

Let us behold him rising in haste, taking that treasure he had so coveted, and carrying it to the temple; there he offers it to the chief priests and tells them: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood—" take back the price of my treason.

Vain step; those wretches, more audacious than he, spurn him with contempt: "What is that to us? look thou to it,"‡ they reply; then they turn away, and will not even listen to him any more. At these words, Judas feels the torments of his soul increase; he sees more clearly all the blackness of his crime; the disdain with which he is treated by his accomplices, makes him also understand that he has become forever odious to the whole world; he knows that God has cursed him; he

* Gen., iv. 13.

† *Ibid.*, iv. 11.

• ‡ St. Matt., xxvii. 4.

reads in every eye contempt and horror; it seems to him that the disciples and all his acquaintances reproach him with his infamous deed, that men and angels fly from him, giving him the name of traitor.

It is all over, said he to himself, casting down on the flags of the temple the thirty pieces he had received,—I shall find rest no more; lost to honor, I shall meet no one who has any esteem or even pity for me.

Thou art mistaken, O Judas! there is one whose goodness is greater than thy malice.; there is one heart that still pities thee, one heart that loves thee.

Ah! come then, and prostrate thyself before thy divine Master; weep for thy crime and solicit pardon, and thou shalt see Jesus open to thee his merciful arms, press thee to his bosom, calling thee his son, and give thee the kiss of peace, which can alone cure thee of the ills thy perfidious kiss has brought upon thee.

If thou dost not dare to go to him, address thyself to his most holy Mother,—she will still obtain mercy for thee.

But no! Judas is going neither to Jesus nor Mary; he allows himself to fall into despair; his mind is darkened, his imagination only presents him with dismal images, his heart is a prey to rage, and, becoming as cruel to himself as he had been to his divine Master, he puts the seal on his reprobation by putting himself to death: from his hideous body his bowels burst forth, whilst his impure soul is carried to “his place” by devils!

O sad end! O deplorable terminus of crime! Ah! if thou wert but known, would any one dare to commit it?

APPLICATION.

Christian souls! who shudder at the thought of the misfortune of Judas, let us fear and adore the judgments of God, comprehending to what excess an unbridled passion may lead.

Let us not count on our own strength, nor even on the means of sanctification at our disposal—Adam sinned in the terrestrial Paradise, Judas became a devil even in the company of our Lord.

Let us not forget that this wretch fell not all at once: he began by faults less, perhaps, than those which we allow ourselves, and he came to sacrilege, to deicide, to despair. Who can assure us that our shortcomings will not end in our ruin?

Let us be faithful, then, in the smallest things; let us remain united to our Lord by prayer, by charity; let us not separate ourselves from our brethren; let us shun the world, let us also shun those who would lead us to laxity: it is on these conditions that we shall remain disciples of Jesus, and avoiding the misfortune of Judas, we shall not compel our God to say of us: "His place let another take."*

Let us maintain in our souls the most entire confidence in the goodness of God; let us remember that the most sensible outrage we can inflict on the heart of Jesus, is to doubt his mercy. Ah! whatever may be our sins, let us think that he wishes to forgive them, provided we have a true repentance for them.

Let us derive a useful lesson from the answer of the

* Ps. cviii. 8.

chief priests to Judas : the world and the devil, whom those perfidious people represent, solicit us to evil by making us hope for happiness therefrom ; and when, after having sinned, we are convinced by sad experience that their promises were deceitful, they despise us and aggravate our ills.

How many unhappy young persons, led astray by perfidious counsels, are told, when their illusions are destroyed ; “What is that to us ? look thou to it !”*

Let a religious allow himself to be seduced by the allurements of the world and its vanities, and when afterwards plunged in the abyss of woe, he complains of having been deceived, he will be told : “What is that to us ? Look thou to it ;” why did your eyes look upon what they ought not to have seen ? Why did you lend an ear to discourses which you should not hear ? Why did your heart detach itself from God to adhere to the creature ? The miserable state to which you are reduced is your own work. What are the torments of your soul to us ? “look thou to it !”

Such shall always be the language of the devil to his dupes for all eternity : “Look thou to it,” why didst thou listen to me ? why didst thou follow my inspirations ? Wert thou not told that I am the spirit of falsehood ?

Oh ! let us never hearken, then, to the suggestions of the devil, the world, or the flesh—the example of Judas clearly proves that instead of procuring happiness, they bring in their train only a frightful legion of woes and pains, and are the cause of death in sin.

* St. Matt., xxvii. 4.

PRAYER.

I tremble, O my God, at the thought that of myself I can work my ruin. Oh! abandon me not, for then I should be like the faithless disciple, and, speaking of thee, I should say to the world and the devil: "What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" Alas! what could they give me? They have only at their disposal numberless evils and the torments of hell—and all that would be the price of my treason.

O my Jesus! preserve me from the misfortune of offending thee. If, in the past, I have been of the number of those who betray thee, grant that I may be, henceforth and forever, of the number of those who love thee sincerely, and who consecrate themselves without reserve to thy service: this is the grace I ask of thee through the intercession of thy divine Mother, the assured refuge of penitent sinners.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 392.)

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

CAUSES OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JUDAS.

“Satan entered into him.”—St. John, xiii. 27.

CONSIDERATION.

JUDAS was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus; he lived in the companionship of all that was holiest on earth; he had received from his Divine Master the most signal favors, even the gift of miracles. Destined to evangelize the nations, he had had the power of him who sent him: at his voice, sinners had returned to good, devils had fled, and the possessed recovered rest. To him, as to the other apostles, it had been said: I will establish you as angel of my people; one day, “you shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

And yet Judas has fallen; and his sad story recalls only a man for ever dishonored, accursed of heaven and earth. Ah! how has that star been obscured? how has that light been quenched in darkness? how has that pillar of the temple of the New Law been overthrown? O my God! I dare not uplift the veil that covers that mystery of iniquity.

Nevertheless, all that is written in the Holy Works is for our instruction: that the misfortune of Judas, recorded in the Holy Gospels, may be to us, then, a salutary

* St. Matt., xix. 28.

lesson, let us seek the causes of that fall in order to avoid them, and so not fall into the abyss into which that wretched apostle cast himself.

The way to evil is easy to traverse, the descent is rapid, as experience but too well proves; nevertheless, it is not usually crossed at a single step: in general, it is only by degrees that people quit the way of virtue, that they become addicted to vice, and arrive, like Judas, at the fatal state of hardness in sin.

Perhaps in tracing it back, one would find that the first step of Judas towards evil was a slight infidelity, one of those faults which we often commit without a scruple, and which predispose us to commit others more considerable, till even the greatest crimes would no longer frighten us.

Besides, the Gospel points out divers steps in the fall of Judas:—

1st. A want of charity towards his neighbor. “He cared nothing for the poor.”* Now, he that loves not the poor who are our brethren, abides in death; and, in that state, what could Judas produce, if not the fruits of death?

2d. A spirit of criticism:—“Wherefore,” said he, “this waste? why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence?”†

3d. Avarice and theft:—“He was a thief, and having the purse,”‡ with the money intended to supply the wants of all the apostles, he stole part of it.

4th. Dissimulation and hypocrisy:—He veiled his passion under the appearance of charity: “Why was

* St. John, xii. 6.

† *Ibid.*, xii. 5.

‡ *Ibid.*

not this ointment sold for three hundred pence," said he, "and given to the poor?"*

5th. Audacity and contempt of the warnings of Jesus:—"Is it I,"† who shall betray thee? he asked; and the wretch had already sold him to the Jews.

Such are the principal steps of the fall of Judas, a fall so great that the very thought of it makes one shudder! Having commenced with small thefts, having continued by hypocrisy and falsehood, and having reached so rapidly such a degree of wickedness as to conclude an infamous bargain with the Jews to deliver up his divine Master to them:—what a subject of terror for all men! what a proof that one falls very quickly into the lowest depths of evil!

Yes! the bargain was made several days before, and the traitor is seeking the opportunity of delivering Jesus to his enemies; yet still he delays the accomplishment of his project. Ah! it is that he has not yet reached the height of iniquity. What then! is there any thing worse than his intention of delivering Jesus to the Jews? Yes! Judas has not yet given himself up to Satan by a sacrilege!

But, behold, the holy supper is celebrated; our adorable Savior with his own hands gives himself to his disciples; and Judas receives and eats that celestial Bread, and thus unites the body and soul of Jesus Christ to his own body and soul, which are the abode of devils!

The sacrilege is consummated! Woe to him who has made himself guilty thereof! Judas is now nothing

* St. John, xii. 5.

† St. Matt., xxvi. 25.

more than the slave of the devil. He arises to go and accomplish his design ; he separates himself and forever from the society of the disciples ! When one is so far advanced as he was then in the way of evil, who can prevent him from committing every crime, and rushing without even a moment's hesitation on a desperate death, and thereby into the eternal abyss ? Is not one exposed to forget that there is still remedy for even so great an evil—the regret for sin committed, and confidence in God's mercy ?

APPLICATION

Alas ! who would not tremble while considering the conduct of Judas ? Called to the train of Jesus Christ, loaded with graces and favors, witnessing the sublime lessons and example of that divine Master, he is, nevertheless, lost ; and that, because he was unfaithful in small things, and that, little by little, he allowed himself to fall into faults which appeared light, but which, nevertheless, disposed him to commit the greatest crimes ! Ah ! let us go down into our own heart at this very moment, and examine, in presence of Jesus Christ, what sentiments reign within us, and whether we are not, like Judas, slaves of some unruly passion.

Have we no affection for earthly goods ? Are our hands perfectly pure ? Are we entirely free from all spirit of ownership ? Does our conscience reproach us with nothing—absolutely, nothing—in the administration confided to us ?

Oh ! let us never allow ourselves to dispose of any money otherwise than it is ordered or permitted by our

superiors ! How important this point is ! Short-comings in religious poverty have always the most fatal effects, and lead directly to the way followed by Judas ; whilst the practice of this virtue prevents in their very beginning a multitude of faults, and maintains us in the good way.

Let us shun all dissimulation ; let us be frank and open towards our superiors : hypocrisy, whatever its object may be, is always odious ; God, who is truth itself, detests deceit, and abandons him who becomes guilty of it.

Let us hear with docility the admonitions of our superiors, let us hearken to the cry of our conscience : without this precaution, we shall quickly fall into tepidity, and ultimately into obduracy in evil.

As it was sacrilege that put the seal on the obduracy of Judas, let us not finish this meditation without examining whether our communions are made with the requisite dispositions. Doubtless, we have, thanks to God, purity of conscience, but have we the fervor that ought to be in us ? Does it never happen that we approach that divine Sacrament with tepidity, which tepidity, if we combat it not, might lead insensibly to unworthy communions ?

Let us every day ask of God the grace of perseverance ; let us beseech him with all the fervor of our soul not to suffer us ever to become his enemies, but to give us the grace to serve him, on the contrary, with greater and greater fidelity till the hour when he will call us to himself to give us our reward.

PRAYER.

In what a slippery desert am I placed, O my God ! and how quickly might I cross the space that separates me from the eternal abyss, did thou not hold out thy hand to sustain me, and send thine angel to guide my steps !

When I think, O Jesus, that man is capable of every crime, that I may be a Judas, that it is possible that I may one day betray thee, I tremble and shudder with horror while considering myself.

Oh ! behold what my soul suffers, and reassure me.

Grant to thy poor servant the grace to persevere in good, to be faithful to thee even unto death. I ask it of thee through the intercession of thy most holy Mother, whom I invoke, saying to her from the bottom of my heart : O Help of Christians ! pray for me.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 393.)

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

“They shall deliver him to the Gentiles.”—St. Matt., xx. 19.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider how Jesus, after having suffered all sorts of insults and bad treatment in the streets leading from the palace of Caiaphas to that of Pilate, arrives at length at that third tribunal, to be delivered to the Gentiles. By this solemn act the people of God, represented by the grand Council, renounce the Messiah promised to their Fathers, and declare they do not belong to him who has been made Priest and King by the heavenly Father.

O unhappy Jews, what are you doing? to what extremity are you going? What! like Judas who delivered up the Savior to you, you deliver him to the Gentiles that he may be condemned to an infamous death!

You understand not what you lose; you see not into what an abyss of evils envy and hatred are leading you, making you deliver unto death him who came to deliver you from your bondage, and to make you happy for ever!

And if it were only a misguided populace who demanded the Savior's death!—but no: it is the chief

priests, it is the heads of the nation who are the most inveterate against him, who direct the conspiracy, who excite the multitude, who deliver up their Messiah to the infidels. They place Jesus chained in the hands of the governor's soldiers; but they enter into the *pretorium* so that they may be able to eat the pasch.

Hypocrites, who fear to defile themselves by the touch of an unbeliever, and who make not the least scruple to compass the death of an innocent man,—of him whom they have not been able to convict of any, even the slightest, fault, and who, by word and deed, has manifested that he is holiness itself! They fear to contract any legal impurity, and yet they do not fear to defile their souls with the greatest of crimes!

Meanwhile, the governor condescends to come forth from his palace, and advances towards them; he consents to give an audience on the steps of the *pretorium* and there receive Jesus, to hear the charges that may be brought against him.

Infatuated by their hatred of that divine Savior, the unhappy chiefs of the Jewish nation had imagined that Pilate would condemn him without examination, and simply at their request: "They would fain," says St. Leo, "make the governor not the judge of the case, but the blind executor of their sentence." But they were mistaken in their calculation: Pilate does not comply all at once with their wishes; he sees in them only a crowd of accusers whose assertions he has a right to examine; hence it is that he says to them, "Of what do you accuse this man?" Surprised at such a question, and scarcely knowing what charges to bring forward,

they content themselves with answering vaguely that if he were not a criminal, notoriously recognized as such, they would not have delivered him up.

O calumny ! O blasphemy ! Jesus is called a malefactor, he who has done only good to all, even to those who desire his death ! What ! amongst that crowd that hears the accusation brought against him, is there not one to come forward and proclaim the works of his infinite charity, saying to all : "I was sick and he cured me," or, "I was blind and he opened my eyes ;" or yet, "I was possessed of a devil and he gave me rest and peace." . . . But no : passion, or criminal tepidity made those whom he had loaded with benefits ungrateful, and no one takes up his defence.

Pilate sees in the reply of the Jews only a refusal, or inability to arrange clearly the heads of their accusation ; wherefore he says to them—Since you know him to be a malefactor, and will not tell me the crimes whereof you accuse him, "take him you, and judge him according to your law."—"But," answered the Jews, "it is not lawful for us to put any one to death."*

Let us here remark that the Jews declare they have no longer the supreme authority, as the sceptre has passed from the house of Juda ! It is, therefore, true, according to the prophecy of Jacob, that Christ has come amongst men ; but it was written that he was to be disowned by the children of Israel.

Let us remark, also, that the Jews substitute other charges for those they had already preferred : there is no longer question of religion, nor of the destruc-

* St. John, xviii. 31.

tion of the temple, nor of blasphemy—the system is changed, and iniquity belies itself.

“Of what crime do you accuse him?” again asks the governor.

The chief priests seeing that Pilate was not satisfied with vaguely formed accusations, and moreover, that he did not recognize as a grave misdemeanor the pretended violations of their law which they had first alleged, began to think that an accusation concerning public order and the interests of Cæsar, would make more impression on him—they therefore reply: “We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the king.”*

Oh! what a perfidious choice of lying accusations! How all is calculated to bring the governor to pronounce the wished-for condemnation.

But what odious calumnies! Jesus, the prince of peace, is accused of exciting the people to revolt! he who said to the Pharisees themselves, “Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s,”† is accused by those hypocrites of forbidding tribute to be paid to Cæsar! he who fled to the mountain when the people would have made him king, is accused in the people’s name of pretending to royalty!

Such is the perfidy of his enemies. Oh! how it afflicts his divine heart!

* St. Luke, xxiii. 2.

† St. Mark, xii. 17.

APPLICATION.

Let us deplore the malice of the enemies of Jesus, which is the triumph of the devil. To what a degree of wickedness man descends under the influence of that spirit of darkness! Alas! he would likewise lead us thither, if we followed his suggestions. . .

We have remarked that Pilate had refused to accede to the demand of the chief priests when once he saw that they were animated by envy; well! like him, let us regard as suspicious all that is demanded by passion of any kind. When we feel within us pride, envy, or any other inordinate feeling, let us not act; let us wait till calm is re-established in our heart, and then weigh all things maturely before God.

Let us distrust grumblers and all those who speak against authority; it is passion that inspires them: their fault-finding ought to be suspicious to us.

Let us not imitate the Jews who make a scruple of contracting a legal impurity, whilst they make none of committing the greatest crimes; and let us beware of forming for ourselves a false conscience, which seeks always to justify what is pleasing and conformable to the interests of nature.

Let us adore Jesus despised and calumniated; let us compassionate what he suffers from the blasphemies uttered against him; and, by our praises, try to offer him a reparation that may console his divine heart.

Let us think of the manner in which he conducts himself towards those who are taking away his reputation, and for whom he has only sentiments of the liveliest

charity ! What a lesson for us who cannot even bear to be reprov'd for our faults ! When shall we, then, testify by our patience in suffering all on the part of our neighbor, that we are really the disciples of Jesus ?

PRAYER.

Thou art accused, O Jesus, thou the holy one of God ! and thou bearest it without complaining : what an example of patience thou givest me ! Ah ! how far I still am from being thy disciple ! The slightest offence annoys me ; I can bear nothing : oh ! grant, therefore, that I may change my conduct, and that, animated by the desire of being like unto thee, I may resolutely embrace the practice of humility, and accept with resignation and with joy all it may please thee to have me suffer in my reputation.

I beseech thee also, O Eternal Wisdom ! to defend me against my own passions. I know that those feelings blind reason and induce us to take evil for good ; wherefore I beg of thee, through the intercession of Mary, the grace not to fall under their control, to be ever master of myself, and to act only in calmness of soul and under the influence of thy spirit.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 393.)

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

JESUS INTERROGATED AS TO HIS ROYALTY.

“My kingdom is not of this world.”—St. John, xviii. 36.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Jews wishing to damage the Savior more effectually in Pilate's mind, persist in presenting him as a seditious character who is disturbing their nation, preventing the payment of tribute to Cæsar, and setting himself up for king.

The governor at once suspects the falsity of these allegations, for if any such thing had been going on, he would clearly have heard of it from the persons who had charge of the public safety. He understands that they want to circumvent him, and to snatch from him an iniquitous sentence; wherefore it is that he takes Jesus aside, to question him on the charges brought against him by the Jews.

Let us contemplate, Christian souls! our divine Savior resigning himself to this new humiliation; let us behold him standing before Pilate, and in the attitude of a criminal! What degradation for him who has been established by his Father as Judge of all creatures, for him who shall one day pronounce the supreme decree on the living and the dead!

Meanwhile Pilate who does not wish to share in the

injustice of the Jews, speaks with a certain degree of kindness to Jesus, and, passing over the first heads of the accusation, as evidently false or unimportant, he questions him on the third: "Art thou," says he "the king of the Jews?"*

This question could have been suggested to the governor neither by the antecedents of Jesus nor the situation in which he saw him—hence that adorable Master replies: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of me?"†

Pilate is astonished at this question by which Jesus calls upon him to reveal the motives whereon he acts, and he answers with a sort of impatience: Am I a Jew? Thy nation and the chief priests have delivered thee up to me; but as I have reason to think that they do not tell me what has actuated them in a measure of such grave importance, I wish to learn it from thyself. What is the matter between them and thee? "What hast thou done,"‡ that has given rise to their accusations?

O Pilate! you ask him what he has done, and on what account he has been summoned before your tribunal. Ah! you know not, then, what works he has accomplished! Interrogate the sick whom he has cured, the possessed whom he has delivered, the dead whom he has raised, and they will tell you what use he has made of his divine power. Interrogate those who have heard him with an upright heart, and they will tell you what influence his words had on souls, adding

* St. John, xviii. 33.

† *Ibid.*, 34.

‡ *Ibid.*, 35.

that "never did man speak like him."* Interrogate his very enemies: they will testify that they could never find aught to censure in his doctrine, or in his conduct.

Meanwhile Jesus goes on to declare his royalty, but first he makes answer to Pilate, he tells him: "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence."†

Let us reflect a moment on this answer so suggestive of thought, and bless our divine Master for deigning, for our instruction, to transform thus into schools of wisdom the very places where he appeared the most humbled.

At this moment he reveals to the world the mystery of his royalty, and declares that it is quite different from royalty here below; that it does not, like the latter, require territory, armies, external pomp, and splendor; that it is, consequently, nowise incompatible with the state of ignominy to which he is reduced, and that even death cannot strip him of it.

O admirable words! O truly celestial doctrine! Jesus is, therefore, king, and truly king; but he reigns differently from earthly sovereigns, his empire is specially exercised over minds and hearts; it is not limited to such or such a country: it extends to all countries and to all nations.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world: hence the Jews have formed to themselves a false idea of the royalty of the Messiah; they have not taken in their true sense the prophecies relating thereto.

* St. John, vii. 46.

† *Ibid.*, xviii. 36.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world : hence we have reason to believe that the kingdom is spiritual and divine, that it is established in hearts by the power of grace, that it is extended by the arms of patience, and prospers by the contempt of earthly goods.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world : our king does not, therefore, promise us temporal advantages : his rewards are, like his kingdom, of a very different nature from those which earthly kings can give.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world : there is, therefore, another world where he who, at this moment, is the victim of the most odious injustice that ever was, rules as sovereign.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world : but then, neither do those who are really subjects of Jesus Christ, belong to this world, they have rejected its spirit ; they have renounced the pomps and usages of the world, which are not conformable to the laws of the Gospel. The world, on its side, is in opposition to them ; it persecutes them, rejects them with contempt, as Jesus foretold to his apostles.*

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world—hence the Jews have no right to deliver that divine King to Pilate : what imports to the Roman governor a royalty wholly different from that of Cæsar ?

Nevertheless, Pilate interrogating Jesus anew, says to him : “ Art thou a king then ? ” “ Thou sayest that I am a king,” replies that divine Master. . . . “ For this was I born, and for this came I unto the world, that I

* St. John, xvi. 33.

should give testimony to the truth : every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”*

From these words, the governor understands that the question between Jesus and the Jews is one of doctrine, wherewith the Roman laws have nothing to do. Hence he says, with a sort of disdain : “ What is truth ? ” And without waiting for the answer, “ he went forth again to the Jews.”†

APPLICATION.

Let us beware of imitating the criminal indifference of this magistrate ; let us hear our adorable Master ; he will tell us that he is “ the way, the truth, and the life ! ”‡ the way by which we must walk to arrive at his heavenly kingdom—the truth which we must believe, or the true light which enlightens every man that comes into this world—the life which our soul is to enjoy. Let us well understand that, without him, there is only death—death begun in this world by the privation of sanctifying grace, death consummated in the other by the privation of eternal glory !

Let us acknowledge him for our supreme king. Let us pay him, with the liveliest affection, the homage of our dependence. Let us devote ourselves for his glory.

Let us make him reign in our hearts : let him dwell there as on his throne, and let all our sentiments be in perfect conformity with his holy law.

Let us accomplish all he demands of us, and manifests

* St. John, xviii. 37.

† *Ibid.*, 38.

‡ *Ibid.*, xiv. 6.

to us by our superiors. It is by this means that we shall attain to the possession of that everlasting kingdom whither he calls us to reign with him.

PRAYER.

I contemplate thee, O Jesus, my divine King ! humbled, standing before idolatrous magistrates, seated to interrogate and judge thee : but I know that thy royalty is not like that of earthly sovereigns, that it is nowise damaged by that exterior which appears degrading to the natural eye. Yes ! under the form of a slave, I recognize my Savior and my God, and I offer thee the homage of my adoration.

Thou callest me to follow thee, thou willest that I be one of thy subjects. Oh ! thanks for that choice so glorious to me, but grant me to be worthy of it by a truly christian courage, and by an immovable fidelity, so that when I appear before thee on the day when thou alone shalt remain king, thou mayst acknowledge me as one of thy faithful subjects, and call me to reign with thee.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 394.)

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

SILENCE OF JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

“Jesus answered him not to any word; so that the governor wondered exceedingly.”—St. Matt., xxvii. 14.

CONSIDERATION.

PILATE having heard our divine Savior reply that his kingdom was not of this world, went out of the pretorium to the Jews, and told them: “I find no cause to him,”* whereon to condemn him. Then the chief priest and the ancients of the people, wanting still to attain their end, begin to utter a whole host of accusations to which Jesus makes no reply.

Meanwhile Pilate, as though disconcerted by this fury on the part of the Jews, again interrogates the Savior, who had been brought before him: “Dost not thou hear,” he says to him, “how great testimonies they allege against thee?” But Jesus remained silent.†

Undoubtedly that divine Master was not wanting in the means of nullifying the new charges brought against him—he could, by one word, bring evidence to confound the malice of his enemies—nevertheless, “He answered never a word;” there, as at the tribunal of Caiaphas, he keeps silence.

“What dignity, what grandeur in that silence!” exclaims St. Ambrose. What a spectacle is offered to our

* St. John, xix. 6.

† St. Matt., xxvii. 13, 14.

admiration ! Behold the Son of God in presence of men sold to iniquity : he is exposed to the contradiction of sinners, to all the shafts of calumny ; he can with one word destroy each one of the charges which insolent malice has been pleased to invent : and yet he hears them all in the greatest silence, without bitterness, without impatience, without emotion. Ah ! could he proclaim in a more eloquent manner his innocence and his dignity.

Pilate himself is surprised, amazed at a silence so mysterious, and so wholly unprecedented in such grave circumstances. He sees Jesus placed under the weight of a capital accusation, and with the prospect of a cruel and ignominious death ; he knows that he is innocent ; he has heard much of his wisdom and his eloquence : and yet he sees him stand in perfect tranquility, uttering not a single word for his justification.

He admires him, and forms anew the project of saving him ; but weak, and consequently culpable, since he has authority in his hand, he dares not openly declare himself against the Jews and treat them as calumniators ; only he would wish that Jesus would persuade them of his innocence : wherefore it is that he says to him in their presence : “ Answerest thou nothing ? Behold how great testimonies they allege against thee.” But, notwithstanding this injunction, Jesus still remains silent, and the governor is more and more astonished.

Let us reflect, Christian souls ! on the course our divine Master here pursues, and try to understand the teachings to be derived from it.

“Jesus keeps silence,” says St. Jerome, “because he wills not that our redemption be longer delayed. He answered all that it was important he should answer. He declares his divinity before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim, and his royalty before Pilate. Nothing more remains but to die for the world’s salvation.”

Jesus keeps silent, because his word has no effect on hardened hearts sinning with full knowledge; besides, what need is there for him to speak, when even his judge declares him innocent, and the new accusations of which he is the object, are no better founded than the others? Moreover, the clamors, the vociferations of the Jews, being the expressions of violent passions, of themselves reveal clearly enough the injustice of those who give utterance to them; and thus the more immoderate, the more tumultuous their words are, they render justification the more useless.

Jesus also keeps silence, to expiate the faults whereof we make ourselves guilty by the bad use of our speech, and especially those we have committed in trying to excuse our sins. Our first parents excuse themselves, and they thereby commit a new fault; we, their descendants, imitate them, and like them, we become more guilty. Now Jesus in his passion expiates for us: it was necessary, therefore, that he should expiate in a particular manner that sin of excuse, and that is what he does by the silence he keeps at the moment when his enemies unjustly accuse him. He thinks not of himself, the innocent one, but of guilty us whom he represents; he is silent, because our sins are without excuse before God; he refrains from speaking before

human justice, because we have nothing to reply before divine justice.

Jesus keeps silence, to exercise the most terrible of punishments on his enemies: Behold the last act of my vengeance, says God to Jerusalem, in the book of Ezechiel: "My indignation shall rest in thee; and my jealousy shall depart from thee; and I will cease and be angry no more."* Well! this vengeance is, at this moment, wreaked on the Jews.

When Jesus rebuked them for their wickedness, when he reproached them with their hypocrisy, with their profanation of the temple, it was with a view to mercy, and the more indignation he showed against them, the more goodness he manifested: but now that he is silent, he accomplishes a terrible act of his justice in their regard; he declares them unworthy of hearing his holy word, and condemns them to remain in their blindness.

Finally, Jesus keeps silence in presence of his enemies, to give us all a great example of patience and discretion in adversity: in replying not to the calumny of which he is the object, he teaches us to suffer, and to forgive all the injuries to our reputation.

APPLICATION.

Let us faithfully observe the rule of silence! we are religious, that is to say, disciples of Jesus Christ by a special vocation:—well! our Master kept silence almost all his life, and even at the moment when his reputation and his life were at stake; can we, therefore, do less

* Ezech., xvi. 42.

than keep silence in the circumstances prescribed by the Rule ?

Let us often remember that where there is much talking, there is also much sin.

What a lesson for us is this silence of Jesus when his enemies defame him by their calumnies ? Do we act like him when the malice of men impugns our honor, and every thing is said of us ? Not to speak of such hard trials, does it not happen that we are vexed and troubled by a mere reprimand, by the slightest reproach ? Ah ! it shows that we are but poor disciples of Jesus Christ !

Let us judge ourselves severely, and beware of trying to excuse our faults ; let us remember that Jesus condemned himself to silence to expiate the sin of excuse, which is, as it were, the summit of the edifice of crime. When we have erred, let us confess it sincerely, then keep silent and confused before the Lord.

Let us hear our divine Master when he speaks, and put his word in practice, fearing lest he should remain in that silence towards us which is the most dreadful punishment, and which leaves man in the miserable state of blindness and hardness of heart.

Let us embrace these various practices, with a view to honor the silence of Jesus during his passion.

PRAYER.

They accuse thee, O Jesus ! and thou sayest nothing to justify thyself, when that would have been so easy, and that all appeared to make it obligatory upon thee.

Ah ! it is that thou wouldst teach us that silence is

often the principal obligation of the Christian, because by it he expiates his sins of speech, and especially his sins of excuse; he maintains his soul in peace during times of trial, he edifies his neighbor, he imitates and obeys thee.

Oh! give me to understand this doctrine, to keep silence as I ought in my holy state, to bear without complaining, without murmuring, the contempt of men, the malicious constructions which they may put upon our actions: this grace I ask of thee through the intercession of Mary, thy most pure Mother, whose whole life was the faithful practice of the virtues I contemplate in thee, and which I desire to possess in order to please thee.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 394.)

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS SENT TO HEROD.

“Pilate sent him to Herod, who was himself at Jerusalem in those days.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Jews, determined to obtain at any cost the condemnation of Jesus, insist on the governor with still increasing fury: “He stirreth up the people,” they say, “teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, to this place.”*

Pilate knew well the falsity of this new charge; but he availed himself of it, to try to get rid of an affair which began to be troublesome. Having heard the Jews utter the word Galilee, he asks if Jesus is a Galilean; and as soon as he has learned that the accused is under the jurisdiction of Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, and then in Jerusalem, he sends him to him, pleased, as it were, to be more able to pronounce with due knowledge of the case.

The Jews, profiting by every incident to humble Jesus, and still hoping to obtain his condemnation, hasten to lead him to Herod: they persuade themselves that the murderer of the Precursor will not spare the master himself; that he who, in payment of a dance, had given

* St. Luke, xxiii. 5.

the head of the holiest of the children of men, will not refuse to condemn Jesus whose death is demanded by the great council of the nation.

Moreover, say they, Herod is still more interested than Pilate in punishing him who styled himself the Christ-king: the motives that had induced his father to order the massacre of the children of Bethlehem, dispose him likewise to get rid of a man who is calumniously represented as dangerous to his power:—such are their thoughts while approaching the palace, transformed into a court of justice.

Let us remark here, and with astonishment, before how many tribunals Jesus Christ, innocence itself, is brought during his passion: he first appeared before that of the two sacrilegious, cruel, and envions pontiffs; then before that of an idolatrous magistrate; and now he is brought before the murderer of St. John the Baptist. Oh! what humiliation!

The divine Savior at length arrives at this new theatre of his sufferings. Herod had felt a sensible pleasure on learning that he was sent to him: it was not that he desired to profit by his salutary teachings, but he hoped to see him work some miracle.

Meanwhile the chiefs of the synogogue renew, in his presence, the accusations they had brought against Jesus at the court of Pilate; and there, as in the pretorium, the adorable Victim leaves calumny full scope and remains silent. Herod himself asks him some questions; but the divine Savior makes no answer.

Let us ask ourselves, Christian souls, why Jesus persists in the same silence as before the other tribunals.

Ah ! it is that here again he expiates our sins of speech ; he teaches us patience, and he wreaks on the Jews the most fearful of punishments, in refusing to speak to them.

Besides he is silent to show that those who, like Herod are slaves of an impure passion, cannot understand and still less relish his divine Word. That sweet Savior ! who accomplishes, and even anticipates the wishes of the humble, not only does nothing miraculous in presence of Herod, but he says not a single word to him, testifying thus how much he condemns his excesses and his pride.

That prince does not understand the motives of this silence of Jesus, and taking offence thereat, he has only contempt for that divine Master. He treats him as a fool, a blockhead. Suiting the action to the word, he has him clothed in a white robe, through derision, and in this state, he presents him as a laughing stock to the soldiers of his guard and to all the people.

And Jesus becomes the object of the most cruel mockery, the most humiliating remarks. Every one looks upon him as a fool ; every one, in accordance with the views of Herod, takes pleasure in loading him with insults and affronts.

Rudely pushed, dragged from side to side, outraged in words, pointed at,—the Savior of the world is, at this moment, as it were inundated with a deluge of ignominy and opprobrium ; all that the fury of the devils could invent is made use of to ridicule and degrade him.

The Jews his fellow-citizens, the Galileans amongst whom he was brought up, unite in insulting him in the most shameful manner.

And yet he does not complain, he is not irritated; on his face none may read resentment, strong emotion, the desire of revenge; he raises not his voice to demand justice; no, he manifests only the most heroic sentiments—charity for men, resignation to the will of his divine Father. He prays even for those who insult him, and his heart invokes on them all the graces and blessings of heaven, in still greater number than the outrages wherewith they load him.

O Divine Word, O Eternal Wisdom of the Father! who manifestest so much patience in suffering for us all that is most humiliating, how thou confoundest our pride, our susceptibility, the cravings of our self love! Ah! that we could but understand the value of humiliations borne after thine example! that we could but have the courage to accept with perfect resignation all those that Providence sends in our way!

APPLICATION.

In contemplating Jesus outraged, scoffed, clad in a disgraceful and ridiculous robe, let us compassionate the sufferings of his divine heart, and bless him for having resigned himself to so much contumely through love for us.

Let us deplore the blindness of Herod and the Jews, and in general of all men controlled by their passions. Oh! to what errors do these disorderly feelings give rise! Let us judge by the conduct of the enemies of Jesus: they gave to light the name of darkness; they made the word of God an object of derision; they treated as a fool him who is wisdom itself. . .

For us who recognize in Jesus Christ our Sovereign Master and our God, let us try by the homage of our faith and piety, to make him honorable amends for the sacrilegious contempt of which he was the object during his passion. Let us adore him as the Eternal Truth and the light of the understanding.

Let us fear beyond any thing that could happen to grieve us, that Jesus should be silent in our regard; let us fear lest he who is truth itself, should no longer make his voice heard in our hearts. Let us remember that where the passions speak he is silent, and that his silence is for a soul the most terrible punishment that can be inflicted on this earth.

Let us carefully preserve innocence, that white robe whereby our soul becomes like unto Jesus Christ: it is to inspire us with the love of innocence and purity that he permitted himself to be clad in a white garment, in Herod's palace.

Let us arm ourselves with courage against raillery; let us not be surprised if we are ridiculed for our way of life, and for practising the virtues of our state. What is there strange in our being treated as fools, when Jesus himself was, and in circumstances infinitely more painful to his tender heart than any in which we can ever find ourselves?

PRAYER.

We behold thee, O Jesus! in presence of Herod and his courtiers. This is the fourth tribunal before which thou appearest: Thou declinest no jurisdiction, because,

considering thyself as charged with every sin, it is thy will to be sent before every tribunal.

But here, Lord, what outrages thou hast to undergo! Thou art made an object of insult and mockery; thou art treated like a fool; thou art ridiculed,—thou, the Eternal Wisdom, the source of all knowledge, the light of all minds! What odious injustice! what sacrilege! what blasphemy!

My God! behold us at thy feet, to offer thee our adoration, and make thee honorable amends for the contempt wherewith thou art loaded. Grant us, O Lord! ever to profess for thee and thy holy religion the greatest, the most profound respect; to accept patiently and in union with thee, the humiliations, the contempt, the insults of men; to never forget the white robe of derision wherein thou wert clad, and which reminds us at the same time of thine innocence, and what thou didst endure to save us and to cure us of our pride.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 395.)

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

JESUS SENT BACK BY HEROD TO PILATE.

“Herod, with his soldiers, despised him, and mocked him, putting on him a white garment; and sent him back to Pilate.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 11.

CONSIDERATION.

HEROD, notwithstanding the annoyance caused him by the silence of Jesus, and the refusal of that divine Master to work prodigies to gratify his curiosity,—notwithstanding the demands of the Jews who renew their calumnious accusations,—does not judge the accused deserving of death, but decides on sending the affair back to the court of Pilate.

The chief priests are not well pleased at the king of Galilee's decision. Nevertheless they conceal their vexation; they order their satellites to lead Jesus back to the pretorium, several of them going before, in order to overreach the governor, and snatch from him at last the sentence of death he has refused them.

Behold, then, Jesus, clad through derision in a white robe, given up anew to the mercy of the cruel men who seek his death, and who make sport of his pains and sorrows. Behold him going forth from Herod's palace where he has been treated with the lowest contempt; for the fifth time since his arrest, he traverses

the streets of Jerusalem, and allows himself to be led to the pretorium where still greater sufferings await him.

Fix your gaze upon him, Christian souls! consider him bound as a criminal, clad as a fool in a robe of ignominy, left at the mercy of a shameless and pitiless soldiery, surrounded by cruel enemies thirsting for his blood, accompanied by a vile rabble who continually insult and load him with abuse!

Listen to the frantic cries of the wretched inhabitants of that ungrateful city, against him who had wrought so many wonders before their eyes, and whose wisdom they had so often admired. Ah! who can imagine what he has to suffer during that painful journey! What insults, what injuries, what blasphemies, resound in his ears! What bad treatment is heaped upon him! The crowd presses around, eager to insult him; it fills up all the streets and even the roofs of the houses whence he may be seen passing along.

Many of the chief priests spread themselves amongst the multitude, and stir up the hatred which hell has already kindled in every heart; the inhabitants of Jerusalem seem to seek but one end—the debasement, then the death, of Jesus Christ.

“O my people,” might he say with the prophet, “what have I done to thee,”* to be treated thus! or rather, what could I have done for thy happiness that I have not done? Is this, then, what I ought to expect from thee? “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!”† . . . And

* Micah. vi. 3.

† St. Matt., xxiii. 37.

behold these same children surround me like young vultures, casting themselves on the prey which their mother, the synagogue, has delivered unto them !

Yes ! this is what is felt by the tender heart of the adorable Jesus, at this moment when he is rejected by the people that was his people—he, the light of the world, is disowned by those to whom he was sent—he, the Word of God, who even in Jerusalem has appeared full of peace and truth, manifesting infinite knowledge and infinite wisdom, is now disgraced, buffeted, turned into derision, treated as a criminal and a fool in that very city.

That supreme greatness, disguised for our sake, as Thomas à Kempis says, is exposed to the insults of an insolent mob ; that sublime nobility is publicly mocked by the lowest of the people ; that beauty, compared with which there is no beauty, is disfigured by degraded men ; Divine Wisdom is treated as a fool by fools ; the source of graces and blessings is loaded by the impious with curses ; innocence itself is cruelly outraged by criminals ! What a sorrowful, what an incomprehensible sight !

Is this, then, what might have been expected from the triumphal entry of that same Divine Savior into Jerusalem, five days before ? He was then hailed as a prophet, as an ambassador from God the Most High, and now he is insulted without any pity ; he is covered with mud after having been covered with flowers !

Listen to those prolonged shouts of laughter that echo around the adorable Master, that hooting indication of the lowest degree of contempt, those confused cries

amid which are distinguishable insulting epithets, sharp and cruel mockery: ah! do you comprehend how much he suffers?

Examine with compassionate attention his deplorable state, his weak and tottering steps, his dying eyes where sorrow is pictured in mournful lines; enter into his heart, Christian souls, and say if there ever was affliction like unto his! But examine, also, if there ever was goodness to be compared to his: for he curses not his enemies, he repays not outrage by outrage; on the contrary, he prays for them, and offers up for their salvation the very pains they make him suffer.

APPLICATION.

O you, faithful souls! who feel with the liveliest emotion the spectacle of the insults heaped upon our divine Master, turn your eyes a moment from the scoffing, jeering crowd, and fix them on the persons who have remained attached to him. Think of the grief of his blessed Mother who cannot be ignorant of what is going on. Think on that of the disciples who have still remained faithful to him, on that of the holy women who will soon publicly testify on the way to Calvary.

Oh! doubtless, a great number of those who had believed in his divinity, still preserved their sentiments of respect and veneration, wept over the outrages he was made to undergo, adored him within their heart, and tried to glorify him the more as they saw him the more humbled, the more loaded with ignominy. How sweet it is to a soul that loves Jesus to recall their

dispositions, to think of the comfort they gave his divine heart by their compassion and their pious homage !

Let us unite with them. Let us weep over the errors of the enemies of Jesus, and, by sincere adoration, make him honorable amends for all the outrages he has received from men, and especially for those he has received from us ; let us bewail our sins which are a contempt of his laws, and even of his adorable person, and by which we imitate the Jews who insulted him whom the angels of heaven adore, and make it their glory to serve.

Let us derive yet other fruits of salvation from the contemplation of this ignominious journey of Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem.

Oh ! how it teaches us in a sublime manner patience and humility ! A prey to all contempt, he is silent, he suffers all without complaining, and prays for his enemies ; he thinks of his Church, he thinks of us whom he calls to follow him in the way of humiliation, and for whom he merits that grace.

How loudly, also, do the outrages offered to our divine Master speak of the vanity of the praises and plaudits of men ! Five days ago he was the object of a whole people's acclamations, and now that same people treats him only with the greatest contempt ! Ah ! what, then, is the glory that comes from this world ! is there anything more fleeting ?

PRAYER.

O Jesus, worthy object of the respect and adoration of angels and men! accept the homage of my dependence, in reparation for the insults heaped upon thee in Jerusalem.

I unite my adoration with that of thy holy Mother, and to that of all those who, remaining faithful to thee, deplored the crime and the misfortune of the Jews.

O Jesus, by that white garment, then the mark of contempt, but since the emblem of innocence! grant that I may preserve my soul in the whiteness and the holy purity thou demandest of me.

I have contemplated thee, overwhelmed with outrages, despised, cruelly mocked, and I have seen thee nevertheless remaining silent and praying for those who outraged thee. Oh! grant that I may be thy worthy disciple; that, like thee, O my divine Master, I may oppose only humility and patience to the contempt, the abusive words, the mockery whereof I may be the object: this grace I ask of thee through the intercession of Mary, thy blessed Mother, whose most holy heart felt, through compassion, the counterpart of all thou didst suffer for us.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 395.)

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

JESUS PLACED ON A PAR WITH BARABBAS.

“Whom will you that I deliver to you, Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?”—St. Matt., xxvii. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

It was undoubtedly with much displeasure that Pilate saw Jesus returning from Herod's palace to the pretorium ; he knew the innocence of the accused ; but he also knew that, animated by a jealous hatred of that divine Savior, the Jews would not relinquish their purpose of having him condemned to the death of the cross.

Nevertheless, he does not yet give up the hope of saving him. With that intent, he a second time declares him innocent, and reminds the people that in doing so he gave the same judgment as Herod himself, who had not treated him as a man who deserved death. But the Jews persisted in their iniquitous demand.

Then a new expedient presents itself to his mind : he remembers that every year, on occasion of the paschal festival, the Jews ask and obtain the deliverance of a prisoner. With a view to induce them to ask that of Jesus, he places him on a par with one named Barabbas, who, having made himself guilty of murder and all sorts of crimes, must naturally have horrified the whole nation.

Pilate, therefore, presents Jesus and Barabbas, to the Jews and asks them: "Which will you have of the two to be released unto you?"*

What a question on the part of a judge, a governor, a Roman prætor! It is as though he said to them: Jesus is innocent, as I have judicially declared; you know, on the other hand, the crimes of Barabbas; you know he is a villain, a murderer, a disturber of the public peace, a man dangerous to you and to the whole nation; well! I leave you to decide which of the two I shall liberate.

The people, expecting no such proposal, would doubtless have hesitated on the choice they were about to make; but the chief priests and the ancients having spread amongst them, excited the multitude to ask for the deliverance of Barabbas and the condemnation of Jesus; and, in order to secure their voices, they cried out the first, "Give us Barabbas: condemn Jesus." And the whole multitude repeated those horrible words: "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!"†

Let us assist in spirit at this shameful spectacle! Let us behold Jesus placed on a par with Barabbas—the descendant of David with a vile wretch—the just by excellence with a villain—the only Son of God, the Eternal Word of the Father, the splendor of his glory, with a robber, an assassin, a seditious man, who, before being condemned, was civilly dead by the notoriety and infamy of his crimes!—What injustice, and at the same time, what humiliation for our divine Savior!

Let us hear what he had said on this subject by the the prophet Isaiah: "To whom have you likened me,

* St. Matt., xxvii. 21.

† St. Luke, xxiii. 17.

and made me equal, and compared me, and made me like?"* "I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised me."† They had to choose between life and death, and they preferred death.

O matchless iniquity! the son of Belial is preferred to the son of God—the murderer to him who immolates himself to give us life! Unhappy Jews, your request shall be granted! No, the conquering Lamb shall not reign over you, for his yoke is too sweet and his burden too light! Your brow, branded with the deicide, shall bear the mark of him whose children you declare yourselves; you shall have for chief him whom Barabbas represents, and who "was a murderer from the beginning;"‡ the devil shall reign over you; he shall keep you in blindness till the end of ages even as he does at this moment when you disown the Messiah, to whom you prefer a wretch, a ruffian!

No! Christ will not rule over you, fallen priests of the priesthood of Aaron, sacrilegious profaners of the holy unction! you have led into error those whom you were commissioned to enlighten; you have ruined them and ruined yourselves: hence your sacrifices and your worship shall cease, your temple shall be destroyed, and henceforth, you shall be only ministers of error.

But let us not confine ourselves, O christian souls! with exciting in our hearts those sentiments of just indignation; let us ask ourselves why Barabbas is thus preferred to Jesus.

This choice is caused not only by the perversity of the Jews, the envy of the chief priests, the pride of

* Isa., xlvi. 5.

† *Ibid.*, i. 2.

• ‡ St. John, viii. 44.

the devil, but still more by our sins : yes, it is our sins that weighed down the balance on the side of Barabbas, it was our sins that made the most contemptible of men be preferred to Jesus.

This Barabbas, this condemned criminal, who can only be liberated on condition that you are condemned, O divine Savior!—does he not also represent mankind become, alas ! so criminal after the first sin, and who, condemned to death, have no hope of safety but in your immolation ? On the side of Barabbas, there are then, in reality, all men, and on the other, you alone, O Jesus ! and when Pilate says, “ Whom shall I deliver ? ” thy Father addresses to thee the same question ; and thou, O charitable Redeemer, O saving Victim, thou answerest : “ Not me but Barabbas ; not me, but men ! Yes, let men be delivered, and let me be crucified for them ! ”

O Lord ! is it thus that a mystery of mercy is veiled under a mystery of iniquity ? that that which is an act of the most crying injustice on the part of thine enemies, is on thy part the work of thine infinite charity and unbounded generosity ?

APPLICATION.

What, then, should be our sentiments of gratitude towards our generous Redeemer, who made himself accursed for us ! Yes ! to deliver us from death to which we were condemned, he gave himself up thereto : he preferred us to himself, us wretched criminals. O prodigy of devotion ! O incomprehensible charity ! In the parallel which his mercy established between

him and us, it is we who have the advantage over him !

Let us be persuaded, from the example of the Jews, that the passions lead to error, warp the judgment ; that under their influence, we prefer evil to good, error to truth, vice to virtue, Barabbas to Jesus !

We are justly indignant at the conduct of Pilate, who dares to put Jesus on a par with Barabbas ; we anathematize the unjust choice made by the Jews ; but have we not reason to turn our indignation against ourselves ? How many times have we not given the devil the preference over Jesus ? What else do we do, each time that we commit sin ? Do we not then say : “ Take Jesus from before my eyes ; I will not have him for king ; I prefer the devil and the world to him ? ”

Pilate knew not Jesus Christ—the Jewish people were influenced by the chief priests : but we Christians, we religious, we have not these miserable excuses ; for we know that Jesus is our God, that the world and the devil are his enemies and ours. Ah ! how, then, can we sufficiently deplore having preferred the latter to him, having put in one scale of the balance our own gratification, and in the other his adorable will, and alas ! so often sacrificed the latter to the former ? . . .

PRAYER.

It is to me, O Lord, that thou addressest that reproach, “ To whom have you likened me ? ” Alas ! I have very often instituted a parallel between thee, on the one side, O my sovereign Master ! and on the

other, the creature and my own satisfaction. A thousand times have I hesitated between the false pleasure which is found in sin, and the true sweetness that is found in thy service ; between the gratification of the senses, and the accomplishment of thy holy laws—between what the world and the devil inspired, and what my conscience dictated.

I have hesitated ; and then—Ah ! I dare not confess it, Lord ! I have preferred my own gratification, the world, the devil, to thee who art my God, my life, my hope, and who can alone be my felicity.

Oh ! pardon, Lord, pardon, for such crying injustice ! I confess and deplore it. Deign, I beseech thee, to enlighten me with thy light, and to excite me by thy grace, to the end that, guiding myself always by thy spirit of wisdom, I may never hesitate between good and evil, but dispose myself constantly and courageously to the accomplishment of thy holy will.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 396.)

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

THE SCOURGING.

“Pilate took Jesus and scourged him.”—St. John, xix. 1.

CONSIDERATION.

PILATE seeing that the Jews had preferred the deliverance of Barabbas to that of Jesus, and wishing to dissuade them from their unjust design which, nevertheless, he dared not directly oppose, devised a new expedient which appeared likely to satisfy their hatred, or at least to excite their pity: “I will chastise him, therefore, and let him go!”*—that is to say, although I am compelled to acknowledge him innocent, I will, nevertheless, scourge him; then I will present him to you all bloody, covered with wounds, and, doubtless, you will no longer oppose my letting him go.

O barbarous and unjust compassion! what grief and confusion thou art going to bring to the divine Lamb whom thou pretendest to save! O guilty and shameful weakness! What! thou knowest, O Pilate, that Jesus is innocent, and thou causest him to be scourged? Is this, then, an expedient worthy of a Roman prætor, in presence of a seditious crowd who would fain wrest from thee an unjust sentence?

* St. Luke, xxiii. 22.

Meanwhile the order is given: Roman soldiers are charged with executing it; and they are about to do so with unheard-of cruelty. A Jewish court could not have given him more than forty blows; but the Roman laws restrict not the number: all power is, therefore, given to the executioners. Furthermore, the motive from which Jesus is scourged tends to make them pitiless, since the object is to reduce that adorable Victim to a state capable of softening the barbarous hearts of his enemies!

Ah! let us transport ourselves in spirit into the court of the pretorium: let us behold our amiable Savior, worn out with fatigue and scarcely able to sustain himself, walking between two lines of soldiers, and becoming more and more an object of contempt and derision to the people and the chiefs of the synagogue! He arrives at the place of torment, he strips himself of his garments; he then draws near to the pillar to which he is to be bound; he bows his head under the weight of shame, and holds out his hands to the ignominious cords of the executioners.

Great God! what a spectacle! how the Christian heart is oppressed at the contemplation of such a picture! it is Jesus, it is the Holy of Holies who is thus humiliated, reduced to the condition of a miserable slave who is about to receive punishment! O heavens, how could you shed your light on such a crime!

But behold! the executioners are preparing to execute the cruel sentence. Some are armed with flexible rods, others with knotted cords, others again with leathern

thongs tipped with iron : they all approach Jesus and begin to strike him.

O Christians, O Disciples of that Divine Savior ! lend an ear, and, amid the cries and cruel acclamations of the Jews, hear the redoubled blows resound. The rods, the whips furrow in every sense the sacred body of the victim ; soon it displays horrible bruises, and becomes all swollen with contusions. Beneath the continuous strokes the skin is torn—livid blood spouts from the wounds—the flesh is exposed—and from head to foot the divine body is covered with wounds. . .

Nevertheless, the executioners do not stop ; they make new wounds on those already formed ; the sinews are rent asunder, the veins broken, the flesh torn, the bones uncovered !

The blood of the Adorable Victim is shed profusely : the pillar is stained with it, and the floor overflowed ; the executioners shamefully trample on it !

O what heart would not be moved with the liveliest compassion ! what eyes would not shed tears at the contemplation of such woes ! To what sufferings, O Lord, has thou subjected thine immaculate body !

Shame and confusion overspread the face of the Adorable Victim who undergoes all tortures, all the flames of sorrow !

And thus was accomplished what was spoken by the prophet-king : “My enemies are grown strong, who wrongfully persecuted me ; I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face. There is no sound spot in my flesh. I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly. My heart is troubled ; my strength hath left me. The

wicked have wrought upon my back : they have lengthened their iniquity.”*

At this moment are also fulfilled the words of Isaiah : There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness ; “ We have seen him : and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him ; despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, who is acquainted with infirmity ; we esteemed him not, we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God ; but he was wounded for our iniquities, and by his bruises we are healed. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there is no soundness in him ; he is covered with bruises and wounds.”†

APPLICATION.

This spectacle softens, penetrates you, Christian souls ! and you would be very hard and much to be pitied if you were insensible to it. But that does not suffice : you must excite in yourselves the most lively contrition for your faults, you must rend your hearts with sorrow for having sinned.

Alas ! yes, the scourging of Jesus is less the act of Pilate who decrees it, of the executioners who execute it, than of you, miserable sinners, who are its true cause ; this atrocious punishment is what we have deserved ; it was for our iniquity that Christ was bruised in infirmity.‡

It was to expiate our sensuality and daintiness that he was, so to say, flayed alive. The spotless Lamb,

* Ps., xxxvii. ; lxxviii. ; cxxviii.

† Isa., liii.

‡ *Ibid.*

the holy Victim, gave up his innocent flesh to blows and bruises in order to expiate for our guilty flesh, and to merit for us the grace to subject it to our spirit, and to chastise it by mortification, when as a refractory slave, it rebels against us.

Let us enter into the spirit of this mystery: let us detest sin, by all the compassion which we feel for Jesus scourged. Let us be truly grateful to this divine Savior for the ineffable goodness which induced him to substitute himself for us, to undergo the punishment that we have deserved, and of which the devils in hell should be the executors. Let us be inspired with a salutary hatred of our bodies: in imitation of all the holy penitents, let us scourge by mortification that sinful flesh which draws us to evil, and let us subject it to the spirit.

Let us arm ourselves with patience in afflictions, trials, sickness: ah! what are our sorrows, compared with the sorrows of our Beloved? What! Should we dare to complain of some privation, after considering him in the state wherein he has shown himself to us?

No! no! that cannot be, especially for us, religious, who acknowledge him as our head, and our model, and who profess to bear the marks of mortification of which he has given us the example, and the merits of which he applies to us.

PRAYER.

Holy God, spotless Lamb, O beloved of my soul! I cannot express what I feel at the bloody spectacle of thy scourging—thine innocent flesh ruthlessly torn, thy

veins open, thy blood shed, thy body covered with wounds—all penetrate my very heart, and call forth my tears.

Behold these tears, O my Jesus ! they are tears of compassion, for I suffer with thee ; but, O my Savior, they are also tears of regret : when I think it was cruel I who struck thee, who gave thee wound on wound, I feel my heart broken with sorrow, I am ashamed of myself, I know not where to hide, to conceal myself from my own eyes.

O Jesus ! by the pains of thy scourging, forgive me ; purify me in the saving bath of thy blood, and grant me to be generous in thy service, to dread no pains, privations, sufferings ! What is all that to what thou hast endured for us !

And thou, O Mary, chaste mother of pure love ! deliver my soul from every stain ; ask that grace of Jesus through the merits of his cruel scourging, and obtain for me to be a mortified religious, and a worthy imitator of thy divine Son.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 396.)

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS.

“And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him; and, plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.”—
St. Matt., xxvii. 28, 29.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our divine Savior exhausted by the long and cruel scourging he has undergone! He is covered from head to foot with bleeding wounds and livid bruises, and unable to sustain himself by reason of the quantity of blood he has shed! The executioners, tired of striking him, at length unbind him; and when once he is no longer fastened by cords to the pillar, he falls to the ground, where, doubtless, he would have died if his divinity had not come to the aid of his humanity, so as to give him new strength and allow him to go on in his career of suffering, even to the end.

O sad and grievous spectacle, fit to soften a rock! O incomprehensible situation of an all-powerful God, sinking under the blows of men, his creatures, stretched on the ground which he has reddened with his blood, reduced to be a cause of barbarous pleasure to his enemies!

He at length raises himself, with a thousand pains; tottering, he picks up his scattered garments. . . . he

puts them on . . . Alas ! they are the only dressing that will be applied to his wounds ! and now, O Pilate ! you may present him to the Jews. If their hatred can be satisfied short of the death of Jesus, it will be now ; for nothing, save death alone, can be conceived to add to such horrible torments.

Yes, human imagination could go no further ; but the devil is more fruitful than man in barbarous inventions ; now it is he who inspires the enemies of Jesus : they will, therefore, find means to add still more to the sufferings of the adorable Victim, and to follow up the scourging by another torture no less cruel.

The emissaries of the chief priests, in fact, remind the people and the soldiers, that Jesus had styled himself king, and that Pilate never mentioned him without giving him the title of " King of the Jews." They propose to make game of him, by making him a mock king, to ridicule his dignity in the most outrageous manner.

The soldiers again lay hold of Jesus, still " dumb as a lamb before his shearer ;" * they treat him with the utmost barbarity : they seat him on the broken shaft of a pillar for his throne, throw over his shoulders, as a royal mantle, an old purple rag, then they place in his right hand a reed for a sceptre, and begin to make show of paying him homage as courtiers are wont to do to their sovereign.

Then, as the height of insult, and also to aggravate his sufferings, a soldier approaches him, holding in his hands a crown of thorns, and places it on his head, amid shouts of laughter from all the spectators !

* Isa., liii. 7.

Then begin again the mock salutes, the ironical homage : the soldiers gather around Jesus, and, passing in succession before him, each one bends the knee, saying in derision, "Hail, King of the Jews!"* All with one accord treat him, then, with the greatest indignity, such as was never offered to the vilest of wretches ; some disfigure his face with savage blows, others pluck his hair and beard ; these spit in his face, those strike him with their fists ; others, again, taking the reed from his hand, make use of it to drive the crown of thorns farther into his head, and by those fearful blows renew all his pains.

What a sight ! and what sentiments it ought to excite in our souls !

Yes ! it is our divine Savior whom we contemplate seated on a stone, all covered with wounds, streaming blood, a purple rag on his shoulders, an ignominious reed in his hand, wearing on his adorable head the diadem wherewith the synagogue has crowned him,† his brow pierced with thorns, his face covered with filthy spittle, and especially with the blood which, flowing from his wounds, trickles down over his dishevelled hair, reddens his eyebrows, mingles with his tears and furrows his cheeks ! . . . Scarcely would his divine Mother recognize him in this state !

And you, Christian souls ! do you recognize him, at this moment when he is draining the last drop, the chalice of grief and that of contempt, a thousand times more bitter ?

And yet, it is truly the adorable Son of the Father,

* St. Matt., xxvii. 29.

† Cant., iii. 11.

the image of his splendor, the sole object of his eternal delight, God like him ! Yes, it is Jesus, our beloved Savior, who is treated thus, who suffers so much opprobrium for our sake !

Let us, then, fix our eyes on him, and understand the value he sets on us. It is for us, it is to restore to us the crown of glory we had lost, that he has deigned to wear the crown of thorns ; it is to prevent Satan from ruling us with a sceptre of iron that he has taken the mock sceptre of a reed. Yes ! the insults heaped upon him, the ignominy with which he is overwhelmed, were justly due to us, because of our crimes ; and we should have felt them for all eternity, if he, in his infinite charity, had not taken upon him to undergo them in our place.

APPLICATION.

Christian souls ! what sentiments should be ours while contemplating the mystery of the crowning with thorns ! how we should hate sin ! with what care we should avoid it ! Let us reflect that, to offend God, is to take the reed which Jesus held in his hand, and strike with it the crown of anguish we have already placed on his head by our past faults ! . . .

Let us not only avoid sin, but work resolutely to acquire the virtues of which Jesus gives us the example.

Let us imitate his patience : we have seen him endure torments the very thought of which makes us shudder ; well ! he endured them without a murmur ; he remained calm, and quiet on the ignominious throne

on which he was seated, as if he delighted in his sufferings.

Let us imitate his humility ; with what ardor, what zeal, should we not embrace the practice of that virtue ! In the scourging, Jesus principally expiated our sensuality ; in the crowning with thorns, he specially expiated our sins of pride, our ambitious thoughts, our vanity, our desire to wear under one form or another the crown of the esteem of men. Ah ! could we again aspire to be honored, after having considered our Master, our model, a prey to the most shameful outrages, and the object of the greatest contempt ?

Let us beware of imitating the Jews, who did not recognize their king under the insignia wherewith they had invested him.

Beneath that crown of thorns, beneath that bloody mantle, let us adore Jesus, the king of our hearts, and let us be submissive to all his commands. He had said, some moments before : " My kingdom is not of this world." Now, he shows it at this very moment when he appears as the most miserable of men. The king of glory in eternity, it is his will to be only in time the king of sorrow.

PRAYER.

O King of glory ! crowned with thorns, I adore thee in the state of suffering and humiliation to which thou hast been reduced through love for me ; I bless thee for thy infinite generosity, which led thee to accept so much degradation in order to raise me up to thee.

The spectacle of thy sufferings excites my gratitude

and my love ; but how much does it not also afflict me ! . . . When I think that it is I who am its true cause, that it is I who have placed on thy brow the crown of thorns, I who have struck thee in the face, who have outraged thee, mocking thy royalty,—my heart is broken with sorrow, shame covers my brow, and I can only say : “ Pardon, O Jesus, pardon, be merciful unto me ; I ask it of thee even by the sorrows which I have caused thee.”

O Mary ! pray for us, poor sinners, now that we ask pardon of thy Son ; and obtain for us that we may procure him as much glory as we have, by our offences, drawn contempt and humiliation upon him !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 397.)

. THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

JESUS IS SHOWN TO THE PEOPLE.

“Behold the man!”—St. John, xix. 5.

CONSIDERATION.

THE passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is but a flow and ebb of pains and humiliations, of torture and ignominy, which, in uninterrupted succession, overwhelm his adorable body and break his divine heart! Thus it was that, after the bloody scourging, the cruel crowning with thorns took place, and after the crowning, the shameful exposure of the victim to the eyes of an insolent and inhuman populace.

Pilate, seeing Jesus all covered with blood and livid wounds, judges that he may present him to the Jews, persuaded that, considering him in that state, they will feel some sentiment of pity for him and ask for his liberation. It appears to him that the expedient, suggested by his weakness and his cruel compassion, must succeed. He thinks that it is to the people he is going to present Jesus; that uninfluenced by envy or hatred, the crowd ought to have at heart only affection and gratitude for a man who has only done them good; that these sentiments of justice await but the opportunity which he is going to give them, in order to manifest themselves.

Moreover, he remembers that a few days before they received Jesus in triumph when he entered Jerusalem, and he hoped that, touched with compassion, they would ask him to set him free.

Thus, counting on the pity and gratitude of the Jews, Pilate orders the victim of his criminal weakness and of the hatred of the chief priests, to be taken to a balcony whence he could be seen by the multitude that fills the street and besieges the palace.

Jesus arrives there ; all eyes are fixed upon him ; ah ! doubtless, all will shed tears : for what man could contemplate such a spectacle without feeling the liveliest emotion ?

Behold, O people ! the Nazarene whose beauty and grace you admired : he is now in the state in which the prophets saw him, without beauty or comeliness.* He appears as a man annihilated, his face is concealed by a veil of blood, of filth, of spittle : his hair hangs dishevelled in tangled locks, on his bruised shoulders. Shame and confusion are stamped on his brow ; all his features are changed, his countenance expresses only the sorrow, the anguish of a breaking heart ; on his breast are seen wounds large and deep ; his whole body appears but one wound—he is like those lepers in whom no sound spot can be found. His august head is surmounted by a crown of long sharp thorns which pierce to the bone !

Consider, O Israel ! to what a state the new Samson has been reduced by the cruel Philistines to whom he was delivered by the synagogue ! see with what contempt

* Isa., liii. 2.

he is overwhelmed. Behold that diadem the sight of which makes us shudder, that purple rag wherewith he is covered to hide his nakedness, that reed which he holds in his right hand: these are the insignia of his royalty.

Listen to the mockery made of him; mark the barbarous insults heaped upon him. Ah! could human imagination picture to itself so many humiliations added to so many sorrows? . . .

And he who is thus placed before thine eyes, knowest thou who he is? Do you see in him thy friend, thy protector, thy Father, the Messiah expected for four thousand years?

No! the multitude of the Jews do not recognize him even as a man! all eyes are fixed on Jesus; but none are moist with the tear of pity, and the people ery with one accord: "Away with him, away with him; erueify him!"*

Pilate, who sees the disposition of the Jews, cannot believe in so much barbarity; he goes forward on the balcony, and wishing to bring back the crowd to human sentiments, he speaks in a loud voice those words of such deep meaning, "Behold the man!" that is to say:—Behold him whom you have delivered unto me, behold the state in which he is. If, in styling himself king, he has excited your envy, his present debasement should awaken your pity; you can hate him no more, since his sufferings and ignominy have reached their height.

But let us leave that unhappy people, influenced by the princes of the synagogue, to answer again with

† St. John, xix. 15.

renewed rage: "Away with him! away with him; crucify him!" Let us turn our mind from a subject so painful, and reflect on the different meaning of those mystic words, "Behold the man!" which Pilate utters, without comprehending the sublime truths they express.

"Behold the man" who mysteriously represents fallen humanity; "Behold the man" who expiates for all sinners, the man who sacrifices himself to restore us, to re-establish us in our former privileges. This is the Man-God in the state to which his love for us has reduced him.

"Behold the model man," the man to whom the elect must be conformable; it is "the new man," with whom Christians must clothe themselves and whose livery they must wear, in order to obtain mercy and to arrive one day at glory.

"Behold the man" whom we must recognize, adore, and glorify as God.

"Behold the man," says Pilate, and for more than eighteen centuries faith replies: "Behold the God who has saved mankind." "Behold the man," say the indifferent and the impious, speaking of Jesus; and the Church replies: "Behold the Man-God who, as he himself declared to Caiaphas, shall one day come in the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead, and to make himself known to all as the only true God."

APPLICATION.

And now, let us imagine, Christian souls! that God the Father, showing us his divine Son in the state to which he has reduced himself for our sake, tells us:—

“ ‘Behold the man’ in whom I am well pleased, and whom you must try to resemble if you would please me. ‘Behold the man’ who was bruised in his infirmity because of your sins. See! his garments are red as those of him who treads the wine-press; but they are red with his own blood which he freely sheds for your salvation, and to expiate your ceaseless infidelity. In reality, it is your pride which has crowned him with thorns, your ambition which has placed in his hand that mock sceptre, your sensuality which has covered him with wounds, your human respect which causes the shame that overwhelms him.”

Christians, and especially we religious, let us hear that voice of God the Father! let us see in Jesus our victim and our model, let us detest sin and take every means of avoiding it; let us make ourselves like unto the new man now shown to the world.

“Behold the man,” to whose image we are to form ourselves. Courage, then! let us put on his livery, revolting as it appears to nature; let us encircle our brow with his dolorous crown, accepting, with resignation, contempt and rebuke; let us cast his bloody mantle on our shoulders, generously embracing the practices of mortification belonging to our state; let us take the reed-sceptre in our hands, humbly acknowledging that, of ourselves, we are nought but weakness and inconstancy.

Happy if, at the hour of death, we may thus present ourselves before that “Man” who is the Supreme Judge of all men! He will know us by his own livery, and will make us participators in his celestial royalty.

PRAYER.

Accept my homage, O Jesus, my sovereign King, my Lord and my God ! In vain would the wicked take from thee thy glory ; in vain do they present thee as having only a reed for sceptre, and a crown of thorns : thou shalt remain supreme Master of heaven and earth, the ruler in time and in eternity.

O my King ! who art also my model, I beseech thee, in the name of the pains thou didst endure in thy Passion, to give me courage to make myself like unto thee, by the practice of humility and mortification, so that, at the day of my death, I may say with confidence to thy Father those words which we daily repeat : " I beseech thee, O my God ! to recognize me by the livery of my Lord Jesus," and to make me a participator in his glory.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 397.)

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION

THE JEWS CONTINUE TO DEMAND THE
DEATH OF JESUS.

“They cried out the more saying: ‘Let him be crucified.’”
—St. Matt., xxvii. 23.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider with a holy horror the cruelty, the blindness, and the malice of the enemies of Jesus, and learn from their example how dangerous it is to allow ourselves to be swayed by pride and envy.

Pilate had thought that by showing Jesus to the people covered with wounds, and, as one might say, bathed in his blood, he would excite pity in every heart; but he soon found himself mistaken; for, the moment he presents him to them, saying, “Behold the man,” the chiefs of the nation cry out: “Crucify him! crucify him!”

Thus, the cruel expedient of the weak governor is of no avail; it has had no effect on those erring souls. Ah! it is that passions are never appeased by a first gratification; it is that envy makes the heart insensible to misfortune, and closes it to pity; it is that man, abandoned to himself, stops not midway in evil, but goes down to its very depths.

No, the hatred of the Jews is not satisfied by the

scourging, the crowning with thorns, the grievous insults that have been offered to our divine Savior; it will have him die the death of the cross: "Crucify him! crueify him," shouts the multitude, excited by the chief priests.

Pilate, thwarted once more in his attempt, says testily to the Jews: "Take him you, and crucify him; for I find no cause in him."* He thus declares Jesus innocent of the crimes whereof they had accused him, and for which they had delivered him into his hands. But what avails that new declaration of the innocence of Jesus with people who seek his destruction, and who have already obtained so much from the weakness of the judge who publicly acknowledges it?

Repeating again the pretended delinquency of the Savior on the score of religion, they invoke against him the law of Moses: "We have a law," say they to Pilate; "and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."† O hypocrites! who appear zealous for the law, whereas in violation of the law, they conspire the death of the Just! . . .

Yes, O chief priests and ancients of the people! you have a law, but it is for you a dead letter, a sealed book: you no longer understand it. You recall it to condemn Jesus "who made himself the Son of God;" but does it not give testimony of him? Do you not read in it that the Messiah was to come with all the marks under which Jesus appears before you?

You have a law, you say; ah! you do not appeal to

* St. John, xix. 6.

† *Ibid.*, 7.

it, to submit to it. Sacrilegious profaners! you make use of it only as a means of attaining your criminal ends.

The Jews had hoped that Pilate, little acquainted with their law, would give way to their testimony, and condemn Jesus for announcing himself as the Son of God; but that word, which, in their fury, escaped from them, well-nigh snatched their Victim from them.

Pilate, as soon as he heard their new accusation, feels more fearful than before; he perceives the divinity in the accused, so different from all others, who has manifested so much wisdom in the few words he has spoken, who has shown himself so strong in affliction, and whose look has ever been so mild, even to his enemies. He has him brought in again, and asks him whence he is? But as Jesus makes no answer, the governor says to him, impatiently and threateningly: "Speakest thou not to me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?"*

Thus Pilate speaks of the power vested in him, and which, nevertheless, by a guilty cowardice, he does not dare to use on behalf of him whom he has found and declared innocent.

But Jesus Christ, wishing to give him a new lesson, reminds him, gently yet firmly, of the origin of that power: "Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore, he that hath delivered me to thee hath the greater sin."†

* St. John, xix. 10.

† *Ibid.*, xi.

Oh ! what precious teachings the divine Master gives to men by this answer.

The power of acting against him comes from above : it is, then, himself, the most high God, who deigned to give men power over him ; his immolation is, therefore, on his part, a free act, inspired by his love for us and by his infinite generosity.

In reminding Pilate of the origin of his power, Jesus teaches all that authority and power to act are only given to men to use according to justice, and never to serve the passions ; and in telling him that he is less guilty than those who delivered him up to him, he also lays down that grand principle, that they who have more light in regard to good, are more criminal in doing evil.

Pilate understands, to a certain extent, these sublime teachings, and would fain set Jesus free ; but, alas ! his heart was far from being accessible to the love of truth and justice. He fears, moreover, to displease men, and from that it is that the Jews are about to drag him into granting them what they ask : “ If thou release this man,” say they, “ thou art not Cæsar’s friend ; for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.”*

These threats make the deepest impression on the heart of the weak governor. Yet he makes another attempt. Seating himself on his judgment seat, he presents Jesus to the people, and speaks those mystic words, “ Behold your King.”—“ Away with him, crucify him,”† cry out the Jews, who will not acknowledge Jesus for their king.

* St. John, xix. 12.

† *Ibid.*, 14, 15.

But Pilate again proclaims his royalty. "What!" says he, "shall I crucify your king?"—"We have no king but Cæsar,"* the chief priests reply.

O blindness! O injustice! no less cruel to themselves than to Jesus! no, they will not have for king that Lamb whose authority they refuse to acknowledge; but they shall be ruled with a rod of iron, then crushed by the very power to which they declare themselves subject.

APPLICATION.

What precious fruits may we draw from this meditation! And first, let us understand that our passions can never be satisfied; that if they are not resisted, they draw us into the abyss of evil, incite us to say to Jesus, in the depth of our heart, those words of the Jews before Pilate, "Away with him! crucify him!" and separate us from him who is alone the author of all good, and away from whom man can expect only infinite misfortune.

Ah! let us not imitate that cowardly governor who, obedient to human motives, dares not oppose the enemies of Jesus; let us impose silence on our passions: all can do it by the grace of God.

All of us, too, inasmuch as we are free, have received from above power to act: let us often think that we should only use it according to equity; that is to say, that we should only decide after the prescriptions of the divine law, and not after our unruly passions.

Let us act only from motives of faith; let us never

* St. John, xix. 15.

obey our vicious inclinations :—we religious ought especially to do so—we who have received so much light concerning good. Oh ! how guilty we should be if sin still dwelt in our hearts !

Let us pay homage to our divine Savior, who, to save us, gave power to men against himself. Let us love him, let us thank him for his infinite generosity, and give him, in return, and by an increased consecration, all power over our heart.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! supreme King ! accept the offering I make thee of my heart and of all that is mine.

Yes, I belong to thee, O my beloved Master ! and my sole desire is to testify it to thee by a courageous struggle against my passions, and by the most constant fidelity to thy holy law.

Oh ! give me strength to carry out the resolution which I form, at this moment, of being all thine, and of showing thee by all my actions, that I really acknowledge thee for my Lord, my king, my God !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 398.)

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

“Jesus he delivered up to their will.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 25.

CONSIDERATION.

IT is in vain that Pilate, wishing to save Jesus from the cruelty of the Jews, has proclaimed his innocence, has caused him to be cruelly scourged, presented him to them in the most deplorable state, and appealed to the generous feelings of the people: all these means, suggested by his criminal weakness, have been ineffectual. The same death-cries are still heard.

The seditious demand is enforced by the threat of a denunciation at the court of Cæsar; Pilate is overcome, he is about to yield to the pressure which the chief priests and ancients of the people have brought to bear upon him.

He is going to yield! . . . And yet what motives he has for resisting still, aye, even unto death! As a Roman Governor, should he quail before sedition? As a Judge, can he resolve to sign an unjust warrant, to declare deserving of death him whom he has declared innocent? Moreover, has he not received several warnings from heaven? Has not his wife sent to tell him to “have nothing to do with that just man?”*

* St. Matt.. xxvii. 19.

And has not he himself perceived the Divinity in that Accused, so extraordinary and so different from others !

But these motives, all-potent as they ought to be, vanish before the fear of falling into disgrace with Tiberius—the cowardly governor accedes to what is demanded of him.

Nevertheless he wishes to manifest by a ceremony in use amongst the Jews, that he throws upon themselves the responsibility of the judgment they force from him : he causes water to be brought in a basin, and washing his hands before the people, he says : “ I am innocent of the blood of this just man ; look you to it.” *

But the Jews, regardless of this warning and declaration, make answer that they assume the whole responsibility of the condemnation they demand. Let us hear them utter that imprecation which stands alone in the annals of nations, as it is unequalled in the rigor of its fulfilment : “ His blood be upon us, and upon our children ! ” †

Unhappy people ! what words have you uttered ? What ! a pagan trembles when about to condemn a just man ! and you, adorers of the true God, you shrink not from calling down on your own heads the divine vengeance merited by that condemnation ! Ah ! you think not that the blood about to be shed is that of a God, and that he who will avenge it, and whose wrath you provoke, is the Master of time—he who disposes of the nations of the earth at his will, and who has all eternity to exercise his justice !

* St. Matt., xxvii. 24.

† *Ibid.*, 25.

O people ! fear you not having the fate of Cain, who, through envy, arose against his brother Abel, and killed him ?—the fate of Cain to whom God said: “What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth to me; cursed shalt thou be upon the earth . . . a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be,”* bearing on thy brow a sign whereby all may know thee.

No ! the Jews foresee not the woes they are drawing down upon themselves. Oh ! how far they are from thinking that the utter ruin of their country shall follow the frightful words, “his blood be upon us, and upon our children !”

Jesus hears this imprecation, and his divine heart is overwhelmed with sorrow because of it: he sees numberless calamities coming upon all Judea and especially on Jerusalem. Ah ! doubtless, he weeps anew over that ungrateful city and her children who would not have the salvation he brought to them, choosing rather for their portion malediction and death.

Pilate also has heard this imprecation, and it doubtless made him shudder with horror; but he takes advantage of it to excuse his weakness, and stifling the last cry of conscience, he at last orders the sentence to be written out which they demand.

He afterwards pronounces it; but, says St. Athanasius, he trembles while doing so, as if he himself were the accused and not the judge.

“O Pilate, O prevaricating judge!” says St. Cyprian, “a time shall come when thy soul shall fall into the hands of him whom thou condemnest: he shall judge

* Gen., iv. 10–12, 14.

thy judgment, and punish thee for the wrong thou hast done." . . .

The sentence is passed on Jesus . . . Ah! what a spectacle, Christian souls, is now presented to our eyes! The wicked have gained their end, and have caused the innocent to be condemned to a most infamous death: the angels veil their faces, seeing consummated the greatest iniquity that ever was; pious persons, who had had some hope in the love of justice manifested by the governor, feel sad at heart and cruelly deceived; hell prevails on earth; the Just by excellence, the Holy One of God is treated as guilty; the Author of life is judged worthy of death. . .

And now, prostrate on the ground, let us behold Jesus standing as a criminal, hearing the supreme decree; let us behold the chief priests and the doctors of the law, exciting the people to applause the most humiliating to that divine Savior, felicitating themselves on having gained their end, and desiring only the shedding of their Victim's blood on the tree of sorrow whereon he is to be fastened.

APPLICATION.

While contemplating Jesus sentenced to death, let us seek for the true cause of his condemnation. We shall not find it in the warrant signed by Pilate, for it expresses only a glorious title, that of "King of the Jews:" the cause is, then, elsewhere.

Ah! let us descend into our heart, it is there we shall find it; for, alas! it is our sins that have caused that sentence to be pronounced on our adorable Master,

according to what is written in the prophecy of Isaiah :
“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . .
for the wickedness of my people have I struck him.”*

Let us, therefore, be less angry with Pilate and the Jews than with ourselves ; let us deplore their iniquity less than our own. Oh ! yes, let us bewail the misfortune we have had in offending God, since it is the sole cause of the condemnation of our beloved Savior.

Let us think that it is to deliver us from eternal death, that Jesus would be condemned to the ignominious death of the cross. What ought, then, to be our sentiments of gratitude towards him ! From the warrant issued against us, miserable sinners, he erases our name and inscribes his own : “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews !”†

We have contemplated our divine Master, hearing with the greatest resignation the iniquitous sentence of the governor ! Well ! after his example, let us be patient and resigned when men condemn us and blame our conduct. It is often justly that we are rebuked, for, alas ! we all have our faults : oh ! then, let us bless God who wills that we be admonished, and let us labor to correct ourselves. If we are unjustly reprimanded, let us unite with Jesus who was condemned to the most infamous death, he the God thrice holy,—and, like him, let us pray for those who persecute and calumniate us.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, thou art condemned to death, and to the death of a malefactor ! thou, innocence itself and the source of

* Isa., liii. 6, 8.

† St. Luke, xix. 19.

all sanctity. But why, then, is so iniquitous a sentence passed? Whence comes it, Lord, that thou art judged unworthy to live even by him who proclaimed thine innocence? Ah! it is that my sins wherewith thou art charged, have called down on thy head the malediction I have deserved; it is that thou hast, by an excess of infinite generosity, substituted thyself for me, to suffer the penalty of my crimes. In reality, it is therefore on my account that thou art condemned; and so this sentence, the eternal dishonor of him who pronounced it, is my work. Oh! what a subject of sorrow and regret for me!

Why can I not, O my Jesus! deplore with tears of blood the misfortune I have had in offending God, and in thus necessitating my condemnation to the pains of hell, or thine to the torment of the cross? Give me, I beseech thee! with the grace of true contrition, that of the most lively gratitude to thee, to the end that I may unceasingly bless and thank thee for thy sacrifice which is my salvation.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 398.)

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS LOADED WITH HIS CROSS.

“The government is upon his^e shoulder.”—Isa., ix. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

SCARCELY is the sentence of death pronounced, when the soldiers, charged with executing it, lay hold on Jesus: they take away the purple mantle wherewith they had clothed him in derision, to insult his royalty; then they clothe him in his ordinary garments, in order that he may be more easily recognized between the two thieves who are also led to execution. As to him, still patient and silent, he allows himself to be in turn stripped and clothed; he utters no complaint, notwithstanding the pain and the confusion he feels.

And now, Christians souls, let us consider our beloved Savior abandoned to his enemies, who are at liberty to do with him what they will! Neither law, nor human power, any longer prescribes limits to their cruelty; there is no longer a heart to pity him; each one seems to say: “Let us treat him as an infamous man, let us hasten to make him disappear from off the earth—let him die!”

Yes! O chiefs of the synagogue, Jesus shall die, because the present moment is given to you; but hope not that his name shall be forgotten and his memory perish. He who told you, “this is your hour,” has not

given you the future; he has even declared that the time of his divine vengeance shall one day see him in the clouds of heaven, in the might of his power and clothed in the majesty of God.

Meanwhile Jesus is brought out of the pretorium; he is led to the cross on which he is to be immolated, and which he is condemned to carry to the summit of Calvary.

Oh! who can tell what he suffers at this moment! Let us consider that he has taken neither rest nor food since he left the supper-room, that he has been for long hours a prey to all the inhumanity of a furious populace, that he shed a great quantity of blood in the Garden of Olives and during the scourging; that he is bruised all over with cruel blows; that he still wears the crown of thorns on his adorable head; that, consequently, he must be reduced to the greatest weakness. He can hardly sustain himself, and yet he is obliged to load himself with the crushing weight of his cross!

Ah! let us contemplate him in presence of that instrument of ignominy and death, placed before him by our sins. What repugnance! what horror it excites in his soul!

Jesus, nevertheless, approaches with resignation the cross on which he is to be immolated; he regards it calmly, and accepts it with perfect submission and even with joy, as being presented to him by his Father! He takes it in his arms, and, touching it, he sanctifies it; he kisses it as the altar of the divine Sacrifice he is going to offer for us; he clasps it to his breast as though to express how much he desired it, and how much he esteems

it; he bends under that dolorous burden, and lays it on his bruised and mangled shoulders! . . .

And now, let us penetrate into his heart, Christian souls! What are the feelings that crowd upon it? On the one side, Jesus is seized with horror, and feels the greatest disgust at sight of the infamous wood whereon he is to die; on the other, he is filled with love and joy, and seems to say—I see thee, I touch thee, I possess thee at last, O cross! which I have so much desired, and which shall be the monument of my love for men—thou by whom they shall learn how much I love them, and by what pains I have merited salvation for them! . . .

And amid all these sentiments, the prevailing ones are love, joy, and the desire of sacrificing himself for us!

But while contemplating Jesus loading himself with his cross, let us reflect on what that mysterious wood is, regarded with the eyes of faith.

The Cross is the standard of the Supreme Monarch, which shall be planted in the sight of all men, and around which all nations shall come to range themselves; it is the powerful ensign of the King of earth and heaven; it is the sceptre by which he shall rule throughout the world, according to that saying of David, which the Church so solemnly sings: “By the wood the Lord hath reigned.”*

The cross is the altar of the holocaust whereon the saving host shall be consumed; it is the wood which the God of Abraham has laid on the shoulders of the new Isaac, conducting him to the mountain of sacrifice; it is the precious candlestick whereon shall be exposed

* Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

he who is the light of nations ; it is the tree that shall bear the fruit of life, and by which shall be repaired the transgression of Adam and Eve in eating the fruit of death, at the foot of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The cross is the emblem of the trials and sufferings of life, and, for us, an encouragement to accept them with resignation and to bear them with patience ; for it is by them principally that we make ourselves like unto the divine Crucified who is our Master and our Model.

The cross is the Christian's book, whereon is written, in the most eloquent language, the love, the tenderness, the infinite generosity of Jesus towards us.

The Cross is a monument of the Omnipotence and divinity of Jesus Christ : from an infamous instrument, it has become the sign of glory and of triumph, the reward of heroic deeds, the ornament of the diadems of kings. Now, had its destiny been thus changed, except that He was God who touched it with his sacred hands and marked it with his blood ? . . .

More yet will he do to glorify it ; for, at the last day, he will present it all radiant to the eyes of all men, who shall see it shine like a star in the heavens.

APPLICATION.

Let us, henceforth, pay homage to the Cross of our Savior ; let us salute it with respect, let us kiss it with love and piety : let us often read that sacred book, in order to learn how Jesus has loved us, and what our salvation has cost him : we shall obtain, by this means,

the grace to lead a truly Christian life, and we shall merit to be numbered with those who, at the last day, shall contemplate with happiness that sacred wood which they shall have made, on this earth, the object of their pious homage and profound veneration.

Let us accept the sufferings and trials of life, with the greatest resignation, and in union with Jesus loading himself with his cross. Let us hear him exhorting us to imitate his patience: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."*

Let us ask ourselves, in his holy presence, if we have worthily answered to his call—we who make profession of imitating him.

How do we receive the Cross?

Is it not with excessive repugnance, which we do not combat on supernatural motives, which if we did, would make us accept it with patience?

Is it not with murmuring against those by whom it comes to us?

Is it not with an inordinate desire of being delivered from it, or yet of having another cross than that which is presented to us?

Ah! this is not being disciples of Jesus Christ! No, we must not fear to carry the cross; it opens the way to heaven; in it are salvation and life: "In it," says the author of the Imitation, "is protection from enemies, infusion of heavenly sweetness, strength of mind, joy of spirit, height of virtue, perfection of sanctity."†

* St. Matt., xvi. 24.

† Imit., book ii., ch. xii. 2.

PRAYER.

May thy Cross, O Jesus ! speak eloquently to me of thy love for me ! may it powerfully excite me to accept with patience and resignation the troubles of life, which are the cross thou wouldst have me bear in thy train ! Grant, then, O my Savior ! that, through love for thee, I may bear it courageously, and esteem myself happy to have by it some points of resemblance to thee.

O adorable cross ! which hast been consecrated by the loving embraces of the only Son of God ; O wood infinitely precious ! the altar of his bloody sacrifice, I salute and revere thee ; thou art my refuge and mine only hope ; it is through thee I hope to obtain of my adorable Savior the grace of imitating him in his sufferings, to the end that I may be one day inseparably united with him in glory !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 399.)

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS.

“They led him out to crucify him.”—St. Mark, xv. 20.

CONSIDERATION.

WHO could comprehend the sufferings of Jesus loaded with his cross! Let us contemplate him, Christian souls, setting out on that mysterious journey, which is to be called, from that moment, the Way of the Cross.

The chiefs of the synagogue, who would not only have Jesus put to death, but also ruin him in the estimation of the people, do all that their infernal jealousy dictates to render his confusion greater, to make him contemptible in the eyes of the spectators: wherefore it is that they make him walk to execution, in company with two criminals, in order that he may be considered as a malefactor.

Oh! what shame is felt by the Son of God, holiness itself, presented to the eyes of all as the most guilty of men! What a triumph for the devil and the Jews who have no other end in view but to humble and degrade him! What joy for the chiefs of the synagogue who succeed at last in drawing the multitude away from him, in making him odious and contemptible! Their satisfaction appears on their face, and they take delight in loading our divine Savior with the most degrading and

insulting epithets. The people imitating their chiefs, gather in crowds on the road to Calvary, and each one makes it a sort of merit to pay the Adorable Victim a tribute of insult and contempt.

Meanwhile the death-train advances: the lictors go before with mournful trumpets; then come the soldiers, the priests, and officers of the temple, then the executioners; in the midst of them walks the divine Victim followed by several chiefs of the synagogue who, mingling with the mob, also utter the most revolting blasphemy, and load with curses him who, having made himself accursed, is led out of Jerusalem to be immolated for the sins of all.*

Ah! let us give ear to those tumultuous shouts, those insults offered to Jesus and his doctrine: is it possible to imagine humiliation greater than that which he experiences? Now is accomplished that prophecy of David: "For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger to my brethren. . . . The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me; they that sat in the gate spoke against me; and they that drank wine made me their song."†

But this is not all that he endures while journeying from the pretorium to Calvary; for how many other sufferings overwhelm him! His strength is exhausted, his body is covered with wounds; his mangled flesh appears falling off in shreds; the heavy cross where-with he is loaded rests but on one wound; the crown of thorns still causes him the most excruciating tor-

* Heb., xiii. 12.

* Ps., lxxviii. 8-13.

ment; at every motion he makes it catches on the cross, renews the wounds of his adorable head, and sends a thrill of anguish to the very marrow of his bones !

All in him speaks of the excessive suffering he endures: his eyes are languishing, his lips livid, his features contracted, his mouth inflamed, his face bathed in sweat. . .

He might be tracked by the divine blood that flows from his wounds, falls to the ground, and is trodden under foot by a cruel and sacrilegious multitude.

Ah ! who would not be penetrated with the liveliest compassion, seeing the God of all sanctity suffer so many pains ! Who would not melt into tears at sight of that victim of our salvation, bearing on his mangled shoulder the wood of his sacrifice !

Let us remember, Christian souls, that he whom we contemplate dragged to the most infamous torture, is the divine Word, the perfect image* of the Father, the object of his eternal delight ; it is the Messiah promised to the earth ; it is the Redeemer of mankind ; it is the Son of promise in whom all nations shall be blessed,* but whom his own nation at this moment repudiates ; it is the Heir whom the master of the vineyard sent to demand fruit of the husbandmen, who cast him out of the vineyard to kill him and keep his inheritance.†

In the eyes of men, who judge only by the outside, it is a criminal going to the place of execution : in the eyes of the angels, it is the universal Pontiff and Victim of salvation entering into the sanctuary, to

* Gen., xxii. 18.

† St. Matt., xxi. 38.

make the oblation of his blood to efface the sins of the world.

Apparently, it is a criminal inspiring horror and disgust ; and, in reality, it is the Sovereign Master of heaven and earth, giving at this very moment lessons of the most sublime wisdom, and calling an infinite number of disciples who, like St. Paul,* will glory in the humiliation of the Cross.

He walks on surrounded by a multitude of fierce men, like so many hungry dogs, and animated, as it were, by the fury of devils ; but he walks also accompanied by angels who form a guard of honor and endeavor to repair, by their profound adoration, the outrages inflicted on him.

APPLICATION.

For us, Christians, disciples of that suffering God, let us not content ourselves with deploring the crime of that outrageous multitude ; but, uniting with the angels who accompany him, let us prostrate ourselves in his presence and adore him ; let us, by our sincere homage, make him honorable amends for all he suffered from his enemies, going from the pretorium to Calvary.

Let us interrogate this adorable Master ; let us ask him why he suffers, and hear him answer that it is to merit for us the grace of salvation, to snatch us from the power of hell, to make us understand what an evil is that sin which has caused him so many sorrows.

Let us hear him repeat : “ If thou wouldst come after me, take up thy cross and follow me.”

* Gal., vi. 14.

Ah ! let us be docile to that divine invitation.

Yes ! let us carry our cross courageously after our Master, let us bear it with faith, patience, and resignation, and thus we shall become like unto that New Man to whom all the elect must be conformable.*

Let us also propose to ourselves to always make the Way of the Cross with piety and attention. How touching is that practice whereby the faithful of all countries and of all periods follow in spirit the bloody footsteps of Jesus in his sorrowful journey, stop as often as he stopped, meditate on his sublime teachings, weep with him over the misfortune of sinners, excite themselves, by the consideration of his numberless sufferings, to patience and resignation in the ills of this life !

Oh ! how dear should that holy exercise be to us ! It is Mary our Mother in heaven, who first taught it by her example ; the Church has enriched it with the most precious indulgences ; and, after devotion to the Holy Eucharist, none is more proper to nourish our piety, to encourage us in good, and to make us strong against the devil.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, O Divine Lamb ! whom I consider going forth from Jerusalem, "loaded with the cross of our sins and the curses of the people," I acknowledge and adore thee as my Savior and my only hope.

Suffer, O holy Victim ! that I may follow thee in thy painful journey from the pretorium to Calvary, to weep for my sins which are the cause of thy sorrows, and also

* Rom., viii. 29.

to praise, exalt, and bless thee, and thus to repair by doing thee what honor I can, the insults heaped upon thee by the crowd that accompanies thee.

Give me, O Lord! to enter into the spirit of the mysteries whereon I meditate when I have the happiness of making the way of the cross! grant that the contemplation of what thou hast endured for me may inflame my heart with the most ardent charity, and render me patient and resigned in all the tribulations which it may please thee to have me suffer in this life!

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 399.)

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS FALLS UNDER THE WEIGHT OF
HIS CROSS.

“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.”—
Isa., liii. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our divine Savior started on the way to Calvary, journeying painfully along it, and leaving bloody footprints after him.

Let us recall to our mind all he suffered, the cruel and odious manner in which he was treated, how he was taken from Gethsemane to Jerusalem, then from one tribunal to another; let us remember his agony in the Garden of Olives, his bloody sweat, the scourging that covered his divine body with wounds and made him again shed blood profusely; the crowning with thorns; let us reflect, moreover, that since the evening before, he has not had the least nourishment, and ask ourselves to what a state of weakness he must be reduced! . . .

His strength is exhausted; he is, as it were, dying, and he would, in fact, be dead, if he did not, by a miracle, retain in himself the breath of life which alone seems yet to animate him.

And yet he must climb the mount of sacrifice, bearing on his shoulder the wood on which he is to be immolated.

His enemies have loaded him with it, and now urge him on, impatient as they are to see him die.

He ascends to Calvary, but slowly; so the executioners wax wroth, and, to make him go on, some drag him, others push him, all torment him with brutal insolence.

Alas! he cannot gratify their wishes. His march is more and more painful—it is plain that every step causes him the most excessive suffering. Soon he feels his knees bend and his last strength fail, and he falls under the weight of his cross. . . .

Let us contemplate him stretched on the ground, lying motionless under his crushing load, surrounded by the inhuman crowd who gloat over his sufferings. . . . Ah! who can conceive what he suffers! his body all mangled sustains, as he falls, a horrible shock which he feels in every wound; his arms and knees, already torn, are torn more still against the ground; his head has struck against the ground, and the wood of the cross, and the thorns that encircle his brow, are driven farther in.

And now he lies on the road like a dying man. No one draws near to assist him; his state does not even excite pity in the hearts of his enemies. His fall is to them only an occasion of renewing the insults and outrages wherewith they have loaded him ever since he has been in their hands. They cruelly beat and abuse him, to compel him to rise.

O God! what a sight, and who can look upon it without shedding tears of compassion! Let us shed those tears, and shed them in abundance: let us testify by

them the part we take in the sufferings of our beloved King, who sacrifices himself for us.

Let us behold him trying to rise: he leans on one side, he supports himself with his hands, places himself painfully on his knees, and rises little by little; bending then under his heavy burden, he journeys toward Calvary, where, alas! he is only to arrive after several other falls, no less torturing for him than that we have been considering.

But let us here make some reflections in connection with the spirit of the mystery we are contemplating.

Jesus falls under the weight of his cross: what a subject of wonder! he who sustains worlds by his all-powerful will,—he whom the prophets called the “Most High,”* “the Wonderful,” “the Majesty,”† appears but as the weakest and most miserable of men!

O Jesus! art thou not the true Samson? Is not thy cross, as foretold by Isaiah, the sign of thy power? How, then, is it become a burden which thou art not able to bear?

Ah! I hear thee answer that it is less under that cross of wood thou dost fall, than under the pains of which it is the symbol, and which, at this moment, overwhelm thee all at once.

Jesus sees the justice of his Father exercising all its severity on him; he considers himself charged with the sins of all men—with that deluge of iniquity which began with the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and will continue to the consummation of ages.

He thinks that he is going to die for all men; and,

* Ps., xcvi. 9.

† Isa., ix. 6.

nevertheless, he sees a multitude of them, who, by reason of their perversity, will not profit by his sacrifice, and shall be lost for eternity.

He considers also the negligence, the indifference, the apathy of so many souls who, although favored by his most precious graces, will not correspond, nevertheless, with his designs upon them, and who, instead of serving him with more and more fervor, will languish in dreary tepidity.

All this weighs on his soul much more than the heavy instrument of his execution weighs on his body.

APPLICATION.

Let us well understand that it is our sins that have overwhelmed our suffering Jesus, and which, according to the expression of the prophet, pushed him, and overturned him that he might fall.*

Let us weep, then, over those we have had the misfortune of committing, and with the tears of compassion we shed over the divine Victim of our salvation, let us mingle the tears of true repentance.

Let us never more allow ourselves to fall into sin: to act otherwise would be to drown the heart of Jesus in sorrow, it would be to add to the weight of his cross, it would be to join his executioners in heaping the most cruel outrages upon him.

No, no, let us have no more of those fatal falls whereby we deliver ourselves to the power of the devils; and if we have fallen, let us arise as soon as we can: Jesus has received that grace for us, together

* Ps., cxvii. 13.

with that of walking courageously and trustingly in the way to heaven.

Let us enter on it resolutely after him, and quit it no more. Doubtless, the enemy of good will attack us fiercely; but through the cross we shall overcome him.

Should we chance to fall under his blows, let us have recourse to Jesus, and arise. That divine Savior fell three times on the way to Calvary, to teach us that, whatever may be the number and the grievousness of our fall, we must not be discouraged, remembering that his mercy is boundless and the merits of his sacrifice infinite.

Jesus, by having fallen under the weight of his cross, also teaches us, in the most sublime manner, patience and resignation; insolently abused by his executioners, he bears it without anger, without a murmur; he has only affection even for those who strike him most inhumanly, and he offers his sufferings to God his Father, for them as for all other men.

What an example! . . . Let us often recall it, and let it make us calm in adversity, strong to bear all the contradictions and all the miseries of this life.

Our trials are the cross we have to bear. Ah! let us not dread that cross which is, besides, inevitable.

Let us take it up in union with Jesus Christ; and it will impart to us that strength which he merited for us by his passion, and by which so many martyrs and confessors of the faith have found that sufferings and death are not only not to be dreaded by the Christian, but that they may be for him a cause of true consolation and ineffable joy.

PRAYER.

I have contemplated thee, O Jesus! falling under the weight of thy cross, and thou hast made me understand that my sins were the cause thereof.

Ah! grant, I beseech thee, that I may bewail them sincerely, that I may do real penance for them, and never commit them more. I ask it of thee through the merits of thy carrying of the cross, and through the intercession of thy most holy Mother compassionating thy sufferings.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 400.)

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

JESUS MEETS HIS BLESSED MOTHER.

“And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.”—St. Luke, ii. 35.

CONSIDERATION.

MARY, informed by the apostles of the apprehension of Jesus in the garden of Olives, comprehends that the moment was come for the fulfilment of the prophecies relating to the Messiah, and consequently, of that which was addressed to herself by the holy old man Simeon, when he said: “Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.”

Wishing, then, to know more particularly what was taking place, she hastens in the morning to go, if possible, to her divine Son, in order to assist him as far as she can, or, at least, to console him in his sufferings.

Ah! doubtless, she would have gone into the palace of Caiaphas, into that of Herod, into the pretorium even; but she is prevented by the crowd. According to the opinion of several Fathers, she could see Jesus when Pilate presented him to the Jews in his bloody insignia of mock royalty, and heard the people cry, “Let him die; crucify him.” She also heard the sentence pronounced, which condemned him to the death of the cross.

What trials for her maternal heart ! What grief penetrates that heart, and what tears it makes her shed !

Soon Jesus goes forth from the pretorium bearing his cross, and Mary goes to place herself where she may see him pass.

Meanwhile the divine Savior advances on his sorrowful way ; he is a prey to the insults and maledictions of a whole people ; his heart is utterly desolate. He looks through the crowd in search of even the faintest sign of pity on some face ; but he sees only hatred and inhumanity, and he says : “ I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none : and for one that would comfort me, and I found none.”*

No, O Lord ! thou shalt not bear thy divine sorrows alone ; the heart of thy most holy Mother is too closely bound up with thine not to feel every torment that is inflicted on thee. Yes, she compassionates thy sufferings, and in her person, the entire Church.

But see ! the dismal procession approaches the place where she is ; soon the lictors who open the march pass before her ; the soldiers follow, then some of the chief priests and officers of the temple,—all blaspheming against Jesus. Ah ! she heeds them not ; her tearful eyes seek another object ; they wander over the ascending crowd, and all at once are fixed. . .

Oh ! what a sorrowful contemplation for Mary ! She beholds her adorable Son exhausted, disfigured, his face bedaubed with spittle, blood, and dust, his brow crowned with thorns, a rope round his neck, in com-

* Ps., lxxviii. 21.

pany with two ruffians, walking painfully along, overwhelmed beneath the weight of the instrument of his torture, blasphemed by the people, ill-treated by the soldiers !

What torments ! and who could conceive them ? they are proportionate to her love for Jesus, and that love is unbounded.

Mary bears at this moment in her heart the cross which Jesus bears on his shoulder, and on which he is going to die. She is overwhelmed with an immense load of sorrow and anguish. The horrible sufferings of her divine Son rend her soul : she suffers the most cruel martyrdom, or rather all martyrdom together.

O tender Mother ! how could it be explained unless by a miracle, that thou didst not die while contemplating the terrible spectacle placed before thine eyes !

Meanwhile Jesus has reached the spot where his divine Mother awaits him. He looks upon her : ah ! for him what a subject of pain, what a heart-rending sight ! he sees that beloved mother plunged on his account in an ocean of grief. His cross is very heavy, the wounds which his crown of thorns is making and those with which his whole body is covered, are most acute—but the sight of his mother is the keenest of all his sufferings.

He would wish to address to her at least some words of consolation ; but the fury of the Jews brutally urges him on. Mary on her side would wish to give him some token of her love, to press him to her heart, wipe his face, take his cross and carry it herself ; but they will

not allow her to go near her Jesus, who moves on with his tearful eyes fixed on her.

Ah ! who can tell us the mystery of that sorrowful meeting and those mutual looks. Jesus suffers in seeing Mary suffer, and Mary, in seeing Jesus suffer. And so in this mute interchange of love, the Son and the Mother feel the greatest affliction. Mary feels through compassion all the sufferings of Jesus, while the sufferings of Jesus are increased by those of Mary : there is, therefore, an increasing progression of pains, which shall cease only when the divine Mother of the Savior has suffered in her soul all that she can suffer.

Let us contemplate Mary, who closely follows Jesus while bearing his cross—ascending after him the mountain of Calvary where she shall witness his immolation—watering with her tears the bloody prints he leaves behind him. . . .

O Mary ! O most desolate of mothers ! thou art the Queen of martyrs. No, we cannot conceive affliction greater than thine : no, never could any one say with so much truth : “ O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow ! ”*

- APPLICATION.

Let us not content ourselves with a sterile compassion for Mary ; let us ask ourselves why she had to suffer, she who never sinned,—why Jesus did not remove from the lips of his most holy and immaculate Mother, the chalice which he himself could hardly drink.

* Lament., i. 12.

It is that, united to her Son by the most intimate union, it could not be but she would share his sufferings, and feel them as her own. It is that, more faithful to grace than any other creature, she was the first to respond to that call which Jesus made to all, to take up their cross and follow him. It is also that, being the co-redemptress of men, she was to suffer for our sins with the adorable Victim who took them upon him. It is that, "the Man of sorrows" being the model of the elect, it was expedient that she who is the most perfect copy of that model, might also be called "the Mother of sorrows." It is, moreover, that Mary represented the Church, and the Church was to be associated in the sufferings of her divine Spouse.

Let us pause on the thought that Mary suffered on account of our sins. Yes, it is we who, in committing them, laid sacrilegious hands on her amiable Son, and disfigured, struck, tormented him; we who have placed upon him the crown of thorns and the infamous cross, and who have presented him in that dolorous state to her maternal eyes! How cruel we have been to that sweet Savior and his divine Mother! Let us weep, then, for our sins, and be firmly resolved to commit them no more.

Let us do penance for all those of our past life, and to that end, let us apply ourselves to follow Jesus bearing his cross—and to follow him with resignation, courage, and love, notwithstanding the repugnance of our nature.

Let us often, at least in spirit, make the Way of the

Cross in union with Mary traversing the road to Calvary; like her, let us with our whole heart compassionate Jesus suffering.

Let us ask the assistance of Mary for poor sinners, who are also her children, and who, alas! present themselves to her eyes burdened with the weight of their transgressions, bound by their evil habits, surrounded by devils, and horribly disfigured by sin. Ah! let us pray to her for them, in order that she may obtain their deliverance. Let us pray to her also for ourselves who are her children, and are climbing so painfully the way we have to go, following Jesus.

PRAYER.

O Mary! remember thou art our mother, and look upon thy children toiling along after Jesus on the way to Calvary. Behold our weakness, our exhaustion, our pains; be touched with our sufferings, and follow, O our mother! the dictates of thy compassionate heart. Come and help us; thou canst do so, O Mary! there is no guard to keep thee from coming and holding out to us a helping hand. Obtain for us that we may correspond with the greatest fidelity to the call of thy divine Son, and follow his footsteps even unto death!

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 400.)

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

SIMON OF CYRENE ASSISTS JESUS TO CARRY
HIS CROSS.

“They found a man of Cyrene named Simon; him they forced to take up his cross.”—St. Matt., xxvii. 32.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Jews, having seen Jesus fall from weakness, while ascending Mount Calvary, feared, says Denis the Carthusian, that he might die on the way, and thus deprive them of the barbarous pleasure of seeing him expire on the cross; wherefore, not to relieve his pain, but rather to prolong it, they stopped a man of Cyrene who was passing that way returning from the fields, and compelled him to carry the cross after him.

Oh! but this circumstance, mentioned in the holy Gospel, is fruitful in salutary instruction! While all here seems to be the effect of chance, yet it is pre-ordained with an admirable economy.

Jesus would have a stranger assist him in carrying his cross—now, that stranger represented the Gentiles who would embrace the true religion: it is, therefore, all of us who, in the person of the Cyrenean, are called to take part in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, to bear the Cross with him, to apply to ourselves the merits of his sacrifice, by accomplishing in ourselves that which,

according to St. Paul, is wanting, of his passion.* Our redemption could not be effected without ourselves. As members of Jesus Christ, we ought to suffer with our head: let us understand this well, and accept with resignation, and even with joy, the share he wills us to take in his sufferings. He, our God, went before us; he suffered first; he ennobled the cross by touching it with his divine hands and carrying it on his shoulder, and that ennobling is become common to all the pains and afflictions of life, which it represented. Ah! should we not be not only patient in our trials, but glory in suffering?

The meeting with Simon the Cyrenean, takes place when Jesus had already traversed the greater part of the way, and when he is within a few paces of the summit of Calvary—this teaches us that the share he gives us in his sufferings is very slight compared with that which he keeps for himself; that he reserved for himself the greatest pains, that he asks but a little thing from us to make us participators in the merits of his sacrifice.

The Jews act freely and from a criminal motive, when they compel the Cyrenean to help Jesus to carry his cross; and yet they are doing what God willed in relation to that man, who, on this occasion, represented all those who are converted to Christianity. Let us learn from this that the designs of God are always accomplished, and that, while respecting human liberty, that Sovereign Master effects whatsoever his providence decrees.

* Col., i. 24.

Simon is highly honored by touching the Savior's precious cross, helping him to carry it, assisting thus at the great sacrifice of the supreme Pontiff, the priest of the great immolation ; but at this moment he does not understand it. He sees only pain and shame attached to the act which he is commanded to do, and as far as it depends on him, he refuses ; he obeys only because he is obliged to do so, and doubtless complains within himself of the violence done him.

Oh ! it is thus we act when Jesus calls us to bear the cross with him ! we view things as human nature directs ; we see only the repugnance of our nature for suffering and humiliation, and not the honor and the spiritual advantage that there is in being humbled with Jesus and for his sake ; we regard only creatures in the trials that overtake us, and so it happens that we complain of the injustice of men in things which are the effect of the special protection of God in our favor. . .

Simon refuses to bear the cross, but, nevertheless, he is obliged to bear it ; so it is with us. In vain do we refuse to accept the tribulations of life ; we are compelled to undergo them, and our refusal serves only to make them more painful.

The cross is inevitable : " Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee, and thou wilt still find something to suffer. The cross is always ready, and every where awaiteth thee. Turn thyself upward or turn thyself downward ; turn thyself inward or turn thyself outward, every where thou shalt find the cross, and every where thou must of necessity hold fast patience. If thou carry the cross

willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end ; namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end. If thou carry it unwillingly thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more, and, nevertheless, thou must bear it." *

Simon at first carries the cross against his will ; but by degrees his mind is enlightend from above, his heart is inflamed with a divine ardor, and he no longer feels either fatigue or reluctance ; grace triumphs over nature ; he comprehends the dignity to which God has called him ; he experiences that following Jesus—which appeared hard—becomes easy and even agreeable ; and instead of complaining of the choice made of him, he blesses the Lord for it and desires to suffer more to please him.

And this is the case with all Christians when they accept in a spirit of faith, and in union with our Lord, the pains and humiliations of this life : "Such a one, thus many ways afflicted, is not without some relief or consolation ; because he is sensible of the very great profit he reaps by bearing the cross. For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burden of tribulation is converted into an assured hope of comfort from God. And the more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by interior grace." †

The cross is given up to Simon by Jesus who then walks before him ; and that is to make us comprehend that the cross that will save us, is that which God wills

* Imit., book ii., ch. xii. 4, 5.

+ *Ibid.*, 8.

us to bear, and not that which we would have chosen ourselves; that, in order to have it sanctify us, we must accept that cross in union with our Lord and with the sentiments that were his.

APPLICATION.

Let us raise ourselves above nature, and direct our course only according to the principles of the Holy Gospel and the example of the Savior; let us always regard with the eyes of faith the trials and humiliations of life, especially those which belong to our state: they are the cross that Jesus presents to us, and tells us to bear after him. Let us be not ashamed to accept the cross, since our God was not ashamed to load himself first with it, and in doing so sanctified it.

Let us not judge our cross by material feelings, but by the light of grace; let us value it as the saints valued theirs, as we shall value it at the moment of death; or rather as we shall value it when we are in heaven, where we shall understand so well that God chastises here below those whom he loves, that he makes those whom he destines for eternal glory, pass through the crucible of tribulation.

Let us consider the trials that come to us by men as coming from God himself, and profit by them to make ourselves like unto Jesus Christ, and increase our merit for heaven.

Courage and confidence! ah! our cross is very light if we compare it with that of Jesus Christ, or to what we deserve to bear! Besides, our Lord precedes us, he encourages and strengthens us; let us walk, then,

resolutely in his train, putting in practice that exhortation which he addresses to us, especially to us Religious : “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”*

PRAYER.

Thou callest me, O Jesus ! to bear thy cross and follow thee : this is, I know, a very great mark of thy affection, it is a proof that thou dost destine me one day to share thy glory ; and why am I unwilling to take it up ? . . . Alas ! I consider only the pain and trouble, and not the advantages I may find therein. Have pity on my blindness and weakness ; enlighten me with a ray of thy light, O Word of God ! to the end that I may appreciate it, and may have the courage to offer myself to bear it in union with thee.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 401.)

* St. Matt., xvi. 24.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

A PIOUS WOMAN WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS.

“Who shall comfort thee?”—Isa., li. 19.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our divine Savior continuing to climb the road to Calvary; let us consider him overcome with fatigue, suffering unheard-of pains, his soul sorrowful, his heart oppressed with anguish.

O Jesus! how lamentable is thy state, and under what an aspect thou dost present thyself to our eyes! Oh! too truly, alas! is that prophecy of Isaiah accomplished at this moment: “We have seen him . . . a man of sorrows, whereupon we esteemed him not.”* The most beautiful of the children of men is horribly disfigured; that august face, the object of the contemplation of angels, and which is to make the beatitude of the saints, is covered with blood and spittle, dust and sweat; that countenance that revealed all the beauty of a divine soul, and which was the delight of the Eternal Father himself, horrified those who looked upon it.

Ah! is that the face which Mary and Joseph covered with kisses, that face which the old man Simeon was

* Isa., liii. 2, 3.

contemplating when he exclaimed : "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord! in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation . . . a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."*

No, never was man found in a state so worthy of compassion !

And yet, with the exception of his blessed Mother and Simon the Cyrenean, not one amongst all the immense crowd that surrounds him, came forward to console and relieve him : pity seems to be extinguished in every heart ; Jews and Romans alike are actuated by hatred and cruelty towards him, or remain most shamefully indifferent.

Doubtless, there is in that multitude a great number of those who have admired the sublimity of his teachings, or whom he fed with miraculous bread in the desert, or cured of their infirmities ; yet no one presents himself to take up his defence, to protest against the injustice of which he is the victim, or procure for him any relief. What weakness ! What injustice !

Nevertheless, a pious woman has placed herself in the divine Savior's way ; she, like Mary, wishes to express to him, at least by a look, the compassion she feels ; she wishes to bring some comfort to his divine heart, by showing him that there are still souls who unite with him, who still burn with pure love.

She casts her eyes over the dreary procession, and perceives her beloved Redeemer. But when she sees him in that frightful state, she feels her heart breaking within her ; her eyes fill with tears ; her soul, penetrated

* St. Luke, ii. 29-32.

with the liveliest compassion, suffers from all the sufferings of Jesus; she is occupied only with sentiments of pity which are the more powerful the more she loves her Savior, and sees him destitute of succor. Thus she calculates not, she reflects on nothing, she allows herself to pause on no consideration; but, prompt as the charity by which she is animated, she makes her way through the astonished soldiers, gets close to Jesus, bends before him and then wipes his adorable face . . .

Oh! how touching is that trait of genuine compassion! Oh! how well that holy woman deserves to be presented to our admiration in the sixth station of the cross!

Jesus Christ, to reward her for the act of charity she had performed, vouchsafed to leave the imprint of his august face on the white veil she had used; and thus she was the first to have an image of Jesus suffering—and an image traced by himself!

What a precious favor! What a rich treasure that holy and true likeness must have been to her! With what piety, what emotion, what love she contemplated and venerated it!

How many times she must have kissed with the most profound respect the impression of that adorable face, the sacred features of Jesus immolating himself for men!

No, the face of our divine Savior, although horribly disfigured, is not an object of aversion to this woman, she turns not away from it; on the contrary, she makes it the object of her most delightful contemplation.

Ah! it is that, enlightened by faith, she discovers a

ravishing beauty under that exterior so hideous to the natural eye: that bruised and mangled face is truly that of the Christ-king, of him who is the splendor of God his Father; and the blood, the spittle, and the dust by which it is covered, are but eloquent voices that tell her how much he loved men. . . .

This prodigy, wrought in favor of that holy woman, is also the figure of the special graces and signal favors which God often grants, even in this world, to generous souls who have the courage to overcome themselves in difficult occasions. That divine Savior shows them the features of his adorable face, and leaves them deeply imprinted in their heart, in order to sustain and encourage them in the accomplishment of the duties imposed upon them by their love for him and their devotion to his service.

APPLICATION.

To us also, Christian souls, our divine Savior shows himself in a state of suffering calculated to excite our compassion. Yes, he shows himself to us in the person of the poor, the unhappy, the sick, of those for whom we feel an aversion, perchance disgust: ah! could we behold him with indifference? Could we refuse to render him what service we can? We piously venerate the image of his august face, the crucifix, and all that recalls our divine Savior: but do we remember that the sick and unhappy, whosoever they be, are the living images of Jesus suffering? let us be, therefore, respectful and affectionate to them.

Let the courage of this holy woman, who fearlessly

makes her way through the soldiers to do a service to a condemned criminal on his way to execution, make us understand how efficacious is the grace of God in docile souls ; how it makes them strong, generous, superior to themselves. Let us have confidence, then, in that divine assistance which is given us when occasion requires, and by which we may triumph over our natural feelings and practise courageously the Christian and religious virtues.

Let the image of Jesus suffering be really the object of our worship ; let us carry it about us, and kiss it with piety, love, and gratitude. Let us place it in our heart ; let us often recall it to our imagination, and always in producing the most sincere acts of thanksgiving and love to our generous Redeemer.

Would to God that our soul, having no affection for creatures, might be compared to the white veil made use of by the pious woman who wiped the face of Jesus, and on which there was no other impression ! Ah ! what happiness for us if it were so ! Our soul would be conformable to him who is the model of the predestinated ;* Jesus would recognize himself in it, and at the moment of our death he would reward us by making himself the object of our eternal contemplation.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! the fairest of the children of men, in what a state thou appearest to us at the moment when thou climbest Calvary ! With what grief and compassion thou inspirest me ! ah ! why can I not, like that holy

* Rom., viii. 29.

woman on whose courageous action I am meditating, wipe away the dust, the sweat, the blood with which thy face is covered ! why can I not, like her, preserve on a veil the imprint of thy features, that I might constantly fasten my eyes upon it, put it often to my lips, and kiss it with the greatest veneration !

But what I desire is not impossible to me, for the service which that holy woman rendered to thee, O my Savior ! I may render to thee, by exercising charity towards my brethren and my pupils, especially those for whom I feel any natural dislike ; and thy holy image I have in the crucifix, in my suffering brethren, in my heart, where I beseech thee to engrave more and more thy divine features, so that at my death thy Father may recognize me by my likeness to thee, and admit me to contemplate with the elect thy now radiant face, which makes the felicity of the angels and Saints in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 401.)

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

JESUS CONSOLES THE HOLY WOMEN.

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 28.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our divine Savior ascending Calvary, and drawing near to the place of his sacrifice.

His executioners have relieved him of his cross; but as it was less that wood that crushed him than the weight of our sins, he is still weak and languishing, and walks but with the greatest pain. The immense crowd around him continues to insult him and blaspheme his holy name. The Jews are eager to see him fastened to the cross and raised before the eyes of all.

Nevertheless, some holy women, touched with compassion, follow him weeping and lamenting. They thus manifest their love for that sweet Savior, and their horror of the deicide which the Jews are committing.

Oh! doubtless this proof of affection consoles the heart of Jesus, doubtless he accepts the tears of those pious persons: and yet he seems to be indifferent to them. Even as he appeared insensible to his triumph on his entrance into Jerusalem, he appears insensible to the part they now take in his pains and his humiliation. His sufferings are excessive, and his degradation at its

height ; but he heeds it not : he forgets himself to think only of the salvation of men.

Turning towards the holy women, he looks on them kindly, and even by that look he consoles, and loads them with his graces. Then instructing them, and all of us in their person, he tells them : “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me ; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry ? ”*

Oh ! but these words are worthy of our most serious meditation !

“ Weep not over me.”—But, Lord, art thou not in the most lamentable state ? Oh ! how could we, beloved of our hearts, contemplate thee covered with wounds, overwhelmed with opprobrium, about to be crucified, and not feel ourselves penetrated with the liveliest compassion ? How can we see thee shedding thy blood, and not mingle our tears with it ? . . .

Yet thou sayest to us : “ Weep not over me.” Ah ! I understand, it is not to forbid us to weep over thee ; but it is to manifest the generosity of thy heart. It is as if thou saidst : “ This is the day I have so ardently desired, it is that of the baptism wherewith I am to be baptized and after which I have sighed for thirty-three years. My love will only be satisfied when I have given my life for the salvation of the world. Behold, now the moment is come. Disturb not by your tears the joy of my heart.”

“ Weep not over me ; but,” adds the divine Master, “ weep for yourselves and for your children.” Weep

* St. Luke, *xxiii.* 28, 31.

over your sins and those of your people; weep over the woes they have brought on you and them.

Thus he teaches us that if it be reasonable to deplore an evil, it is much more so to deplore that which has caused it; that his torments and his ignominy, excessive as they are, ought less to provoke our tears than the sins which caused them.

It is our sins that have delivered him to his enemies, which have mangled his body under the blows of rods and whips, and drawn the blood from his veins; it is our sins that have plaited and placed on his brow the crown of thorns, and disfigured his august visage; it is our sins that have laid the cross on his bruised shoulder; it is our sins that are going to pierce his hands and his feet, and to take his life away: they should, therefore, be the first subject of our tears.

“Weep for yourselves and for your children.”—The divine Savior, whose heart is an abyss of kindness and tenderness, thinks less of his sufferings than of the misfortunes of the people to whom he was sent,—the people whom he would have saved and who will not let him save them. He repeats his predictions on ungrateful Jerusalem. Speaking of its inhabitants, he said: “The time shall come when they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’”*

O amiable heart of my Jesus! thou forgettest thy sorrows to mourn over the miseries that await thy people, and to induce them to prevent them. Deal as mercifully with us. Teach us what misfortunes impend over us, and, by thy grace, make us avoid them.

* St. Luke, xxiii. 30.

The divine Master ends with these words, which are so fit to strike us with terror: "For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"* If the fire of divine justice is so active on me, a green tree, laden with flowers and fruits, what will it do on the sinner who is but dry wood, barren and useless? . . . If such are the evils that overwhelm me for having merely taken the appearance of sin, what must not those expect who have the reality of it?

Oh! the sublime lesson that Jesus gives us in these few words! Why do we not comprehend them? why not conform our conduct to them?

APPLICATION.

In union with the holy women of Jerusalem, let us compassionate the sorrows of Jesus; let us take part in what he suffers, remembering, furthermore, that he suffers on account of us and for us.

Let us weep over him; but as he exhorts us, let us weep rather for ourselves. Let us bewail the spiritual miseries that beset us ever since the day of the first sin. Oh! but we have reason to shed tears of compassion for ourselves!

Let us weep for our sins, whereby we have overwhelmed the divine Victim of our redemption with sorrow and ignominy; but let us bewail them sincerely. Let us commence, this very hour, a truly penitent life, and so procure for the heart of Jesus the consolation he most demands of us, and which will merit for us a share in the fruits of his sacrifice.

* St. Luke, xxiii. 31.

Alas ! woe to us, if we weep not for our sins, and do not do true penance for them ! Woe to us if, during our life, we are but dry wood, a useless sapling, cut off from Jesus—from him who is the true vine to which we must be united, and by which alone we can bear fruits of salvation and find favor before God !

Let us also expiate the sins of other men, and particularly those of our relations, thinking of the outrage those inflict on God, the injury they cause to their authors, the woes they bring on the earth.

Let us be more and more penetrated with the fear of divine justice, and apply ourselves to prevent its rigors. Alas ! it may be that we do nothing for that end ! Let us examine before our divine Savior, and ask ourselves, whether we are not that dry wood to which he alludes in the words on which we have been meditating. Is there in us the spirit of faith and charity which, like vivifying sap, produces fruits of sanctification and salvation ; or are we not withered up by pride, vanity, envy, sensuality, which render the soul insensible to the things of God and barren in good works, and which call down the divine vengeance on themselves ?

PRAYER.

Thou dost tell us, O Jesus ! not to weep over thee, but over ourselves. Ah ! permit me, O my divine Master ! to let my heart give way to the sentiments of compassion which thy state inspires. Yes, let me weep over thee, weep over thy sorrows greater than all sorrows : but, according to thy word, vouchsafe to grant me that I may weep rather for myself, because I

have had the misfortune to offend thee, and to have been by my sins the cause of thy sufferings.

Grant, I beseech thee, that weeping over thee and over myself, I may participate in the merits of thy holy passion; and persevering in the accomplishment of my duties, I may be before thee not that dry wood which thou didst curse, but that green wood to which thou comparest thyself, and which merits to be transplanted to the gardens of the heavenly Sion.

O holy daughters of Jerusalem! who did not fear to openly manifest your compassion for your divine Redeemer, obtain for me strength to pronounce always generously for him, and to walk courageously in his train on the way of Calvary, which is alone for us the way of heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 402.)

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

JESUS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS.

“They stripped him of his outside coat.”—Gen., xxxvii. 23.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our divine Savior arrived at the summit of Calvary. It is the terminus of the dolorous way he had to traverse ; but would, alas ! that he had reached the terminus of his sufferings ! It seems even that all those wherewith he has been overwhelmed—the agony, the bloody sweat, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross,—were but the prelude to what he was yet to endure. All that did but slacken some sparks of the fire of divine wrath, which was to be wholly exhausted on him who had made himself the victim of sin.

On Calvary it was that divine justice waited to strike him in all its rigor.

He arrives at the rock where he is to be lifted up on the cross ; the crowd gathers around, in order to satisfy the cruel curiosity to see him crucified.

Jesus looks before and around him : what a horrible picture meets his eye ! Here the cross, the nails, the executioners : there, the Pharisees insulting him by their sacrilegious mockery ; farther on, the crowd loading him with curses. . .

As he had done in the Garden of Olives, he again fixes his mind on the multitude of impenitent sinners who will not profit by his sacrifice. Then his soul feels the greatest desolation, and his strength failing him, he falls at the feet of his executioners, who are arranging all for the bloody execution.

It was the custom to give to the condemned, before crucifying them, a draught of wine and myrrh, which had the effect of benumbing their sensibility in the midst of their torments. This should have been given to Jesus : but alas ! by a cruelty worthy of their previous cruelty, the Jews gave him vinegar and gall, thus fulfilling what David had said : "They gave me gall for my food."*

He refuses not to put that bitter draught to his lips : he tastes it in order to expiate our sins of sensuality ; but he refuses to drink it, so that nothing might diminish the sufferings by which he desires to satisfy for us.

Meanwhile the signal is given to execute the cruel warrant granted by Pilate ; the executioners brutally lay hold of the divine criminal and tear off his garments.

Oh ! who could conceive what Jesus suffers from this barbarous stripping ! His robe, the only covering laid on his divine body, was glued to his adorable flesh by the blood he had shed : but in tearing it violently off him, they re-open each of his wounds, they make him feel anew all the tortures of the seourging, and inflict upon him such pain as makes one shudder to think of.

To the sufferings of the body are here added the

* Ps., lxxviii. 22.

more painful sufferings of the soul. To what a fearful state Jesus is reduced ! to what an abyss of humiliation he has sunk !

Behold him, Christian souls, like a victim who had been flayed before being immolated, and who lay panting at the foot of the altar of sacrifice. His sacred members present a shapeless mass of mangled flesh ; his divine blood streams from every part of his body, which is itself but one wound.

Alas ! He who bedecks the meadows with their verdure and their flowers, he who gives the birds their plumage, he who adorns the sun with his radiant splendors, has not a rag to cover him ! The King of earth, the Master of heaven, has for royal mantle only the bruises that men have made on him, and the blood that oozes from them. . . .

Angels of heaven, come, then, to your Lord ! cover with your wings his divine body, hide it from the eyes of those wretched blasphemers who so shamefully outrage the supreme King—he before whom you prostrate yourselves to adore in him the very splendor of God.

But, no ; Jesus consents not to receive the visible assistance of the angels : he wishes to expiate the misfortune we have had in losing, by sin, the robe of innocence wherein we were arrayed in baptism, and which was given us by our mother the Holy Church, as his own tunic had been given him by his holy mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. He wishes to make us comprehend the state of misery in which the soul is that has no longer the robe of grace ; and how much he suffers when vice and impiety separate from him the

souls which, being united to him by charity, are, as it were, the glorious garment of his mystic body.

He wishes to show us to what degree he practised poverty, and to teach us that he was at his death, as at his birth, wholly deprived of earthly goods.

He wishes to teach men generously to renounce all, and to strip themselves of earthly things, that they may become like unto him and apply to themselves the merits of his sacrifice.

APPLICATION.

How many lessons does our divine Master give us in this circumstance of his dolorous Passion!

Let us understand them and put them in practice.

Let us deplore our sins which have despoiled us of the robe of innocence, which have ravished our soul of all its beauty, and rendered it an object of horror in the sight of God: the Church told us, on the day of our baptism, to preserve with care the white robe wherewith she clothed us; but alas! in sinning, we have thrown it off and cast it far away.

Let us hasten to clothe ourselves in it anew by a true conversion. Let us embrace with courage the practice of penance—of that second baptism which, through the mercy of God, restores us to the state wherein the former had placed us.

Let us be resigned in our trials, whatsoever they be. Let us remember Jesus suffering, and imitate him. We have contemplated him, enduring without a word, without uttering a complaint. the most intolerable pains and

the most humiliating opprobrium: oh! what a condemnation of our impatience and our delicacy!

Let us be fond of religious poverty, and cherish it faithfully. Let us think often that Jesus allowed himself to be stripped of his clothes, in order to merit for those whom he calls to his service the grace to renounce entirely all earthly goods, to put on and worthily wear his livery, to observe in its full extent that precept of St. Paul: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Let us also think that it is an inevitable necessity that every man should be stripped, and stripped of all, whether involuntarily, by the accidents of life and by death; or voluntarily, by penance and mortification. Let us consider what precious advantages the second of these despoilments procures, and practise it with generosity; let us labor unceasingly to strip ourselves of our ourselves, of our passions, our self-love, that we may be the imitators of Jesus Christ, who is our model on earth, as he shall be our reward in heaven.

Divine Jesus! spotless Lamb! who, to expiate the misfortune I have had in depriving myself of grace, subjected thyself to so many sorrows and humiliations, how can I thank thine infinite generosity? This will be by trying to become like unto thee, in stripping myself entirely of myself, especially of my pride and my sensuality; it will be by practising humility and mortification; it will be by taking care never more to lose the precious gift of innocence which thou hast bestowed upon me.

O Mary! O my Mother! help me to preserve that

* Rom., xiii. 14.

sacred robe wherewith I must be covered to be received into heaven ; that nuptial garment wherewith I must be adorned to be admitted to the hall of the eternal banquet ; to have a place at the wedding feast of the Lamb, who, to merit for me that signal favor, suffered unheard-of pains and inconceivable humiliation !

Beseech him, by those pains and by that humiliation, to grant me perseverance in the state of grace, to the end that my soul may be ever fair in thy sight, and that it may be admitted, immediately after my death, to enjoy his presence, and to glorify him with thee in the heavenly home.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 402.)

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

“They crucified him.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 33.

CONSIDERATION.

FOR more than four thousand years, divine justice awaited on Calvary the solemn expiation: that hour is come at last, the Victim is ready, the altar is prepared, the sacrifice is about to be accomplished.

Jesus, stripped of his garments, raises his eyes to heaven; he then casts them on the cross beside him, and lays himself down on that bed of pain and ignominy, and presents his hands and his feet to the executioners who are going to pierce them.

Ah! come now, Christian souls, to your beloved Lord! come and contemplate that august Victim in this moment of supreme torture; come and consider his immolation, which took place on a mountain so that all men might witness it; assist at the most dismal spectacle that ever was on earth; place yourselves in the front rank and look closely at that heart-rending sight. Behold! the executioners pitilessly seize the right hand, put it roughly on the wood of the cross, and one of them pierces it with a large nail which he drives in with repeated blows!

Ah! who can understand what our divine Savior

feels at this moment ! The very thought of such suffering makes one shudder with horror ; the imagination shrinks with terror from such a picture. . .

But no, let us turn away neither our imagination nor our thoughts ; let us, on the contrary, consider with pity and with attention that horribly mangled hand fastened to the cross, those bent fingers, those broken nerves, that blood that spouts from the torn veins, that contracting arm, that stiffening body, that head restless in the fire of pain ! Let us read on the face of our blessed Savior, and in his tearful eyes, what he endures in his immaculate flesh, to expiate the sins we have committed in our guilty flesh.

And yet this is not all that Jesus has resigned himself to suffer on this occasion ; it even seems that this is but the beginning. The bloody execution continues : the executioners seize the left arm of the Victim which abandons itself to their cruelty ; they pull it violently to bring the hand to the place where it is to be fixed, and by that tension, the very idea of which makes one shudder, they enlarge the wound in the right hand, dislocate the bones, cause Jesus unutterable sufferings ; then they nail the left hand as they did the right.

And thus it is, O Lord ! that those divine hands are treated which had wrought so many prodigies—those hands that made heaven and earth. . . . And it is by man, who is their work and for whom those miracles were wrought, that they are mangled, pierced, and fastened to the cross ; and that near Jerusalem, amongst that people and by that people whose conductor thou hast been, who had received from thee innumerable benefits.

O disorder! O ingratitude! more sensible to thy soul than even the pain thou sufferest in thy divine body.

Meanwhile the executioners seize the feet of Jesus—those feet so beautiful, as the prophet says,* and which had brought peace—those feet on whose traces so many unfortunates had crowded—those feet which were so often tired in going to sinners and giving consolation to those who suffered.

Yes; the executioners seize them, they pull them violently, and thus disjoint the bones that were not so already; and taking an enormous nail, they drive it through the two feet, and for the third time they strike repeatedly.

Hearken, Christian souls! hearken to those dismal strokes, heard distinctly by the now silent crowd—those strokes heard by the Blessed Virgin Mary, and sounding so sorrowfully in the heart of her who was his her mother. Ah! weep with her, weep for the sorrow wherewith she is penetrated, and also weep for yourselves, weep for sin which is the cause of what Jesus and Mary endure on Calvary.

The Victim is nailed on the wood of his immolation; at this moment is literally accomplished what our divine Savior had foretold by the mouth of David: “They have pierced my hands and my feet; they have numbered all my bones.”†

O Jesus, adorable Master! deign, we beseech thee, to teach us why thou wouldst suffer such cruel torment. Ah! it is that thou art the expiatory victim of all our sins, and that those sins are alas! innumerable. At

* Isa., lii. 7.

* Ps., xxi. 17, 18.

this moment, thy feet are pierced because of our backslidings from the way of virtue. At this moment, thy hands are pierced because of the sins of action which men have committed.

Oh! how great the number is! how they are multiplied from the day when Eve stretched out a guilty hand to the tree whereon was the forbidden fruit, to that hour of darkness when the executioners laid their sacrilegious hands on thy sacred body! How numerous they will be again from that hour till the moment when Antichrist shall insolently raise his hand against heaven! Ah! I understand, Lord, that it is in thy hands thou didst endure thy greatest exterior sufferings!

APPLICATION.

In union with Mary on Calvary, let us compassionate the sufferings of Jesus; let the blows that crush that divine Victim find an echo in our heart . . . It is for us he suffers: let us then suffer with him.

Let us bless him, sacrificing himself for our salvation. With all the saints, let us magnify his love, which led him to substitute himself in our place, to be bruised by divine justice exasperated by our sins.

Remembering the pains of his crucifixion, let us deplore our wanderings from the way of virtue, and all the sins we have committed in the use of our hands. Ah! let us never forget how much he suffered to expiate them.

Let us also think that Jesus crucified is the model to whom we must be conformable. Nevertheless, let that thought not frighten us: our adorable Master does not

call us to suffer torments like those he suffered ; and, besides, if he did call us to it, he would be himself our strength, and would render us superior to our ills. But there is a cross to which we must be fastened, and on which we must place ourselves, and subdue ourselves by the desire of becoming like unto him. Yes, for us Religious, our cross is the accomplishment of our holy Rules ; and the nails that fasten us to that cross, are our obedience, our gratitude and love for Jesus ; also the holy engagements that we have contracted, to make sure of our perseverance in his service.

Let us be faithful to those engagements, let us live as true Religious : by that means, we shall render ourselves conformable to the divine model who showed himself to us on the mountain of Calvary, and we shall secure our rights to the celestial heritage which he merited for us by his sufferings and death.

Let the contemplation of the crucifixion of Jesus encourage us also in our sickness ; let us then cast our eyes on that divine Savior fastened to the cross, and think that the cross he wills for us, is the bed of pain to which we are confined. Let us appreciate as a real advantage this point of resemblance to him, and unite our sufferings with his.

Let us adore him with the most affectionate piety on the cross to which he is fastened. Let us adore the wounds of his hands and feet, and ask of him the grace to manifest them in ourselves by the practice of penance and mortification.

PRAYER.

Behold me, O Jesus ! near thy cross, weeping at the remembrance of thy sorrows and at the thought of my sins which have caused them. Oh ! how cruel I have been to thee ! Nevertheless, permit me, O my generous Redeemer ! to open my heart to the hope of pardon ; for the wounds of thy hands and feet, which so eloquently reproach me with my crimes, are also the motive of my confidence : I know that by them thou hast expiated for me, and I may regard them as a writing which thou thyself didst trace with thy blood, and which gives me a right to thy mercy. I beseech thee, then, by thy divine wounds, and also by the sorrows of thy blessed Mother, to forget all my sins, and to give me courage to be an obedient religious, faithful to my rule, crucified to the world, having in my heart only the desire of pleasing thee and of persevering in thy holy service.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 403.)

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

JESUS RAISED ON THE CROSS.

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”—St. John, iii. 14.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate, with all the devotion of which our heart is capable, our Divine Savior nailed to the cross, and suffering, in that state, the most cruel pains ; let us read on his contracted features the violence of the torment he endures ; let us hear his prolonged groans ; let us fix our eyes on his pierced hands and feet, on the blood which flows from them as from four inexhaustible springs. Ah ! let us comprehend from that sight how much he loved us and how much our redemption costs him. . .

And yet, how far he still is from having suffered all he has resigned himself to suffer for our salvation !

He is fastened to the cross ; but the cross must be placed standing, for the altar of the great sacrifice must be raised up, and present to the world's view the Lamb immolating himself for its salvation—he who is the mediator between God and man must be placed between heaven and earth—he who is the light of nations must be exposed to the view of all nations—that Son of man who from the height of his gibbet shall draw all things

to himself, must be lifted up. Ah! he must also expiate, by that painful and ignominious exposure, the sins of pride by which we have sought to raise ourselves and make ourselves conspicuous before men. Yes, the cross must be placed standing; but alas! what sufferings for Jesus!

Let us assist in thought at that elevation of the august Victim—the cross is uplifted from the earth—its foot is placed against a rock—it is gradually raised by means of cords and ladders—then when it is standing, it is slipped along and let fall with all its weight into the hole prepared to receive it.

Oh! who can tell what Jesus feels from this horrible shock! what a tearing of his pierced hands! what a counter-shock in the wounds of his feet! Ah! the imagination is lost, the eye of the soul refuses to fathom that abyss of torture. Never was seen sight so heart-rending; never did the sun shine on such a scene: hence he veils his light in horror!

And when I reflect that he who suffers thus is my beloved Master, my God, my Father, my Jesus, that he suffers for me and on my account. No! I know not on what sentiment to pause: I am at once agitated by confusion, sorrow for my faults, love, and gratitude; all urge me to cast myself at the foot of that cross, which now stands on Calvary, and there pour forth my tears! . . .

But in order that the contemplation of this mystery of inconceivable torment may produce in us fruits of salvation, let us also pause on the other reflections to which it gives birth.

This elevation of Jesus on the cross had been fore-

told, for the prophets had seen "the root of Jesse stand for an ensign of the people ;"* and above all it had been prefigured by the serpent which Moses raised in the desert, as Jesus himself tells us in these words: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up."†

This elevation of the cross takes place on a mountain, in the middle of the day, on the eve of the most solemn Sabbath, before people of all nations, and that, to show that all men who have all been bitten by the infernal serpent, are called to cast on the divine Crucified the look of faith that will heal the wounds of the soul. Ah ! if the sight of the brazen serpent, which was only a figure, was, nevertheless, so efficacious in curing the Israelites of the bite of the fiery serpents, how much more so will be the contemplation of Jesus on the cross in delivering us from the injury the devil has done us !

That divine Savior, uplifted on the tree of ignominy, expiates our pride, whereby we would have raised ourselves above our brethren ; and teaches us at the same time in what consists the true elevation, that which is allowable, that to which we should even aspire—we Christians, who have in our souls the holy ambition of resembling our Savior.

Yes, it is by the cross that man is truly elevated ; it is on the cross that he shows himself truly great, and it is only when he has been exposed thereon to the eyes of all, that he becomes worthy of esteem. Let us desire to be elevated, but elevated on the cross in union with our adorable Master.

* Isa., xi. 10.

† St. John, iii. 14.

Ah ! we know well that at that thought nature revolts ; but Jesus elevated on the cross, merited for us the grace of prevailing over nature. He calls us to go upon the cross with him ; he will have us united with him, in order that in this union we may be exposed to view and made, as St. Paul says, “ a spectacle to the world.”*

And not only does he call us, Religious, to go up with him on his dolorous cross, but he calls all men thither, for he says : “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.”†

And it is to repeat to all generations this necessity of raising ourselves, by the Christ, with Jesus Christ, that the mystery of the elevation of Jesus on the cross is constantly recalled to Christians by the images of the crucifix, which the Church everywhere exhibits before our eyes. Furthermore, that elevation is mysteriously continued in the holy sacrifice of the mass : three times does the priest elevate the holy Victim to present it to the adoration of the faithful, and thus recall the elevation of the same Victim on Calvary.

APPLICATION.

Let us often cast our eyes upon Jesus on the cross, and think of what he suffers and why he suffers. Let us compassionate his pains, and remembering that our sins have caused them, penetrate ourselves with sentiments of the most bitter repentance.

Let us be humble, modest, resigned : let us desire for ourselves no other elevation than that of the cross.

* 1 Cor., iv. 9.

† St. John, xii. 32.

Let us say with St. Paul : " God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Let us frequently recall to our mind the elevation of Jesus on the cross, but particularly at the moment when the priest elevates the consecrated host and chalice.

Let devotion to the cross be ever dear to us. And, indeed, how could it be otherwise ? The crucifix is the most eloquent of books ; it speaks to the senses, the mind, the heart ; no language is so touching. It says all, it teaches all, it answers to all. It consoles in the bitterest troubles : it animates to the greatest efforts of virtue ; it induces charity, patience, forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies.

Let us bear it constantly about us, let us place it in every apartment of our houses, let us salute it with the most religious respect when we meet it in town or country.

Let us form our pupils to devotion to the crucifix : let us teach them to read that book, which speaks so eloquently of the love of Jesus for us, and the price at which he estimated our soul. Let us persuade them to have on them and near their bed that ever blessed image, which we can never sufficiently venerate.

May the sight of the crucifix excite in us the most lively confidence, and inspire us with all the love wherewith our hearts ought to be inflamed for Jesus.

O crucifix ! O sweet image of my Savior ! O book of the Christian ! thou shalt ever be dear to me ; I shall ever have thee about me, and have thee near my bed. Often, yes, very often, I will kiss thee with love and respect ; and

* Gal., vi. 14.

when the final moment comes, it is to thee that I shall give up my last sigh, it is in thee that my soul shall find strength by which to escape the devil, and to raise itself up to that abode where my Savior is, and whither he draws all those who are his.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! who wouldst be exposed to the view of all nations, as the sign of hope, permit me to hope in thee! I contemplate thee on the cross, I recall all the pains thou didst there endure; remembering also that thou didst endure them for my salvation, I open my heart to confidence. Thou didst say that when thou wert uplifted from the earth, thou wouldst draw all things to thyself: ah! thou wilt save me, O generous Redeemer! No, thou wilt not permit so many toils and sufferings to be lost for a soul which aspires to go to thee, to be united with thee here below in thy sufferings and thy crucifixion, that it may be united with thee in heaven in thine infinite glory.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 403.)

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

JESUS ON THE CROSS.

“The root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people.”
—Isa., xi. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us go in spirit to Calvary, let us place ourselves before the cross, and contemplate the adorable Victim of our redemption on the altar of sacrifice.

What a picture is presented to our eyes! To what a state our beloved Savior is reduced, and what sufferings he endures in his body and in his soul!

Let us behold him hanging between heaven and earth, fastened by enormous nails to an infamous gibbet, his body naked, mangled, covered with wounds, or rather, all one wound, from head to foot. Let us behold his immaculate flesh cruelly torn, his bones disjoined and laid bare, so that, according to the expression of the prophet, they may be “numbered.”* Let us behold his august head crowned with thorns, his face streaked with the blood which, streaming from his brow, mingles with his sweat and his tears; let us behold his languid eyes, his contracted lips, his inflamed mouth giving utterance to sighs and groans that might soften the hardest heart. . .

* Ps., xxi. 18..

Let us consider, with the liveliest compassion, his pierced hands and feet, and the fearful wounds which the nails have made—wounds from which all his blood flows drop by drop, and which, like those of the crown of thorns, are the ceaseless cause of inconceivable torture to him. If he would rest on his feet, he has, alas! no other support than the iron that is through them; if he would rest on his hands, he enlarges the wounds thereof, and produces the most painful tension in his arms; moreover, his chest heaves, and his breathing becomes more and more difficult; if he cast down his head, he adds to the weight of his body and tears his hands already torn; if he lift it up, he rests the crown of thorns against the wood of the cross, and the thorns are driven farther in.

Thus there is nothing for him but pain, without any possible alleviation! Great God! what a situation! And it is our beloved Jesus, it is our adorable Savior who has vouchsafed to reduce himself to it for our sake!

But who could conceive what he suffers in his soul! They have crucified two thieves, one on his right and the other on his left, in order to point him out as a notorious malefactor; and as he had foretold by himself and by Isaiah, he is “reputed with the wicked!”* . . . O God! to what fellowship is he reduced who is the figure of thy substance, and reigneth with thee in the same unity of nature! Ah! what shame for him! what ignominy! and also what destitution, and what outrage!

When a man is about to enter into his agony, every one crowds around him; he receives all possible care

* Isa., liii. 12; St. Mark, xv. 28.

and attention : he hears words of comfort and encouragement to sustain him in those trying moments, every one is eager to show that they love him, and regret him ; but for Jesus there is no such thing, except it be from his blessed Mother, St. John, and the holy women, whose presence is, in one respect, a subject of great pain to him. Yes ! all that surrounds him contributes to excite in his mind the most sorrowful thoughts, and to break his heart with anguish : he suffers, through compassion, all that is suffered by Mary, the beloved disciple, and the holy women ; he sees his enemies regarding him with insolent contempt, cursing him and wagging their heads, making game of the tortures he endures ; he hears what is said around the cross, and he hears only the most cruel mockery and the grossest insults, abusive epithets, blasphemy, and loud bursts of derisive laughter, mingling with the groans of his divine Mother. . . .

Into what an ocean of bitterness he is plunged ! And yet this is not all ! Jesus is not limited to the present moment, he beholds the future till the end of ages ; and, of the almost infinite number of men who are yet to be born, he perceives but a very small number who will really be his friends : all the others present themselves to his mind as having inherited the hatred of the Jews for his person, his doctrine, and his Church.

He sees them refusing to apply to themselves the merits of his sacrifice, and running to their eternal ruin, notwithstanding all he does to save them ; he sees them trampling, with sacrilegious indifference, on the blood he sheds in torrents for them ; he sees them transmitting from generation to generation a fatal inheritance of

vice and error, denying the truths he has taught, despising his morality, mocking his cross, continuing, in regard to the Church, his mystic body, the outrages wherewith the princes of the synagogue at this moment overwhelm himself.

How great, then, were the pains of his soul! How his divine heart was bruised by affliction, during his agony on the cross!

APPLICATION.

The picture of the sufferings of Jesus penetrates us to the depth of our soul. Ah! let us think that he endures them for love of us miserable sinners, whose hearts he wishes to gain, and for whom he substituted himself before the justice of his Father; let us think that he endures them in order to induce us to hate and avoid sin, which caused them, and to teach us patience, resignation, courage in trials.

Let us understand what duties result to us from them, and accomplish them cheerfully and faithfully.

Let us love Jesus who loved us so as to sacrifice himself for our salvation; and let us love him with all our heart. Let us prove it by giving him our fondest affection and a perfect devotion to his service.

Let us often contemplate him immolating himself on the cross: let us correspond with the intention of the Church who wishes the crucifix to be the most precious ornament of our dwellings, that we may carry it constantly about us, that it may even be placed along the streets and roads, so that we may unceasingly think of the adorable Victim of our redemption.

Let the sight of Jesus on the cross inspire us with a true repentance, remembering that it is on account of our sins that the God of love suffers and dies. Let us weep for the misfortune we have had in committing them, and mingle our tears with the blood he sheds to expiate them.

Let the sight of Jesus on the cross make us likewise understand the cost of grace; let it dispose us to set an infinite value on that treasure, for the purchase of which the Son of God suffered infinite pains, and which he valued more than his very life.

Let it inspire us with patience in the ills and adversities of life: for what are our troubles compared to those of Jesus? Ah! could we still refuse to accept them, after having considered him suffering every pain and every sorrow?

But no; it is not enough to excite ourselves to patience: let us bear in mind that Jesus on the cross is the model to which all the elect must be conformable.

Yes, Christian souls, this is the heavenly spouse whom you must resemble! raise yourselves, then, by grace above your nature; and, notwithstanding your repugnance, love, desire, and seek for the pains and trials of life, because it is by them especially that you will succeed in reproducing in yourselves the lineaments of your beloved Savior, and manifest your love for him.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, divine Crucified! how great have been thy sorrows, and how generous thy love for us! Thy hands,

thy feet, thine august head, or rather, all in thee and about thee, tells me what thou didst deign to suffer for me.

Why, then, O Jesus! hast thou loved me to such an excess? What didst thou see in me that induced thee so to sacrifice thyself, without pity either for thyself or thy blessed Mother? Ah! thou answerest me from thy cross, that thou saw what I might become by profiting of the graces thou didst merit for me by thy sufferings.

Give me, O Lord! I beseech thee, the courage, the generosity, the strength of mind, necessary to correspond with all those thou offerest to me.

At this moment thou dost offer me the grace of sorrow for my sins; may I weep for them, then, and may my tears, like those which Magdalen poured forth at the foot of the cross, mingle with thy blood and obtain pardon for me! Thou dost offer the grace of thy divine love; grant, then, that I may love thee, O my good Master! Thou didst say that when thou wert lifted up from earth, thou wouldst draw all things to thyself; draw me, then, to thyself, now that thou art on the cross, and grant that I may be for ever united to thee!

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 404.)

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS ENEMIES.

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”—
St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

CONSIDERATION.

CONTEMPLATE, Christian souls, your God fastened to the cross, lifted up between heaven and earth, and teaching men by his example the sublime precept of the forgiveness of injuries and the love of enemies—a precept before unknown, and which he had already taught by these words: “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.”*

At this moment his enemies surround him like furious bulls,† delighting in outraging him; their every word speaks hatred and contempt; the soldiers insult him and divide his garments amongst them; the mob, excited by the synagogue, blaspheme him; the chief priests, the doctors of the law, the ancients of the people, are not ashamed to mingle with the multitude, and to mock him in the most cruel and humiliating manner; the passers-by wag their heads and heap curses upon him, and all call upon him to come down from the cross if he be the Son of God, or if it be true

* St. Matt., v. 44.

† Ps., xxi. 13.

that God protects him—all dare to say that he is not Christ, since he answers not their sacrilegious challenge by his own deliverance.

There is no longer, for him, either pity or humanity in hearts ; he hears only a unanimous concert of mockery, reproach, insult, blasphemy.

How many motives has he not, then, to draw down signal vengeance on his enemies ! His dignity outraged ; God his Father offended, and offended by deicide ; all justice set at nought, insults without number heaped on an innocent person who suffers, without a word, the torments of a most cruel punishment—does not all this induce him to cry out, as did the high priest Zachary, immolated between the altar and the temple : “The Lord see and requite it ?”*

But he will not do it. Heeding only his infinite goodness, he will call down on his enemies only heavenly graces. His divine mouth opens, and it utters only those sublime and most wonderful words : “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !”

What ! Lord, is this what thy heart inspires in such circumstances ? They curse thee, and thou answerest with blessings ; they calumniate thee, and thou offerest excuses for thy calumniators ; they put thee to the most infamous death, and, when about to undergo it, thou prayest for thy persecutors and thine executioners ! No, Lord ! it is not thus that man could act : thou art my God, and I adore thee. Hadst thou spoken but these words, they would suffice to establish thy divinity.

* 2 Paral., xxiv. 22.

Oh! help me to understand their meaning well during this meditation, in order that I may enter into the spirit of the mystery I am contemplating, and that I may learn to know well the perfections of thy sacred heart.

Jesus had not broken silence whilst they accused and condemned, even whilst they crucified him: he thus acquitted himself in a sublime manner of his august character of Victim, and remained dumb as a lamb before his shearer;* but being at once the Victim and the Priest of his Sacrifice, he had to act as a priest, that is to say, pray and instruct. Hence he speaks, now that he is standing on the cross and in the attitude of a priest at the altar, and his first word is at once the most admirable and the most efficacious prayer, and the most salutary lesson. Forgetting that it is *by* his enemies he suffers, he only remembers that it is *for* them “Father,” said he, “forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

How eloquent is that supplication, and how calculated to obtain its object!

Jesus says, “my Father,” and not “my God,” in order to soften the more the heart of him whom he addresses: he asks pardon for his enemies in a precise, definitive manner—*Forgive them*—but he alludes only in a vague way to the crime for which he asks pardon, and even without naming it, he hastens to excuse it on the score of ignorance in those by whom it is committed.

Oh! how great, how charitable, how generous is the Pontiff we have with God! that Priest of the new law,

* Isa., liii. 7.

who, entirely forgetting himself, thinks only of us on the altar of sacrifice !

It was not only when on the cross that Jesus solicited our pardon ; no, as eternal priest, he unceasingly addresses his Father, asking pardon for sinners. Always, and especially when he immolates himself in the holy sacrifice of the mass, he repeats that prayer, “ Father, forgive them ; ” and he will repeat it so long as pardon may come from heaven to earth.

But let us consider some other points under which the charity of Jesus is revealed, in that prayer which he makes as priest, and which is the object of our meditation.

Whilst being cruelly outraged, he thinks not of himself, but of the outrage offered to God his Father, and the misfortune of those who are its authors ; what afflicts him is the sin of deicide the enormity of which he comprehends, and the curses drawn down on their own head by those who commit the crime. There is in him no desire of revenge, no hatred, no dislike : his heart is only accessible to the feeling of ardent love for his enemies, and that at the very moment when the latter give themselves up to the dictates of the greatest and most unjust hatred. He asks pardon for them through the very blood he sheds in the very torment they make him undergo, and he asks it with “ prayers and supplication, with a strong cry and tears.”*

O goodness ! O generosity ! O infinite charity !

* Heb., v. 7.

APPLICATION.

Let us often remember Jesus crucified, and praying for his executioners, and let us regulate our conduct on that of our adorable Master.

Could it be that after such an example, our heart would feel—I do not say hatred, or desire of revenge—but even the slightest rancor or resentment? Ah! if so, could we still dare to call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ? . . .

And what pretence could our self-love offer to justify any resentment? What are we, compared with the Son of God, whom we have contemplated forgiving those who crucified him? What injury is done to us, in comparison with the outrages he underwent, and the ignominious death he suffered?

Nature inclines us to exaggerate the wrongs done us by our neighbor: well! let us ask grace of Jesus on the cross to triumph over nature; and let us animate ourselves, under all circumstances and towards all persons whatever, with sentiments of the most generous charity. If any one offend us, let us forgive him with all our heart; and if we cannot excuse the action, let us at least excuse the intention.

Yes, let us forgive all and always. Let us do more; let us pray God to forgive and enrich with his graces every person against whom we feel any resentment, envy, or dislike.

Let us have a firm hope of being ourselves forgiven, since we know that Jesus on the cross prayed for us, and that God heard his prayer; but let us not forget

that the pardon he merited for us and asked, can only be granted to hearts that are contrite and merciful towards the neighbor.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! who, from the height of the cross dost pray for thine enemies, grant us to participate in thy goodness, thy charity : we are thy disciples—grant, then, that we may be really thine imitators !

Take from our hearts, O Jesus ! all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatever else may wound charity and lessen brotherly love,* to the end that we may repeat with confidence the prayer which thou hast taught us : “Forgive us, as we forgive.”†

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 404.)

* Imit., book iv., ch. ix. 6.

† St. Matt., vi. 12.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS PROMISES HEAVEN TO THE GOOD THIEF.

“This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.”—
St. Luke, xxiii. 43.

CONSIDERATION.

THE holy Gospel, speaking of persons who outrage Jesus fastened to the cross, mentions the thieves who were crucified with him, and records the words of one of them: “If thou be Christ,” said he, “save thyself, and us.”*

Thus a vile wretch, a felon, repeats the insults of the Jewish priests, and calls on Jesus to show his divinity by coming down from the cross. This unhappy man, instead of preparing for death, outrages him who, in some moments, is to judge him and pass sentence upon him for all eternity. . . .

Meanwhile the other thief is suddenly enlightened by a celestial light; and, docile to the grace given him through the merits of the divine blood which flows near him, he recognizes in Christ his Lord and his God. So, immediately animating himself with zeal for the glory of our divine Savior, he rebukes his companion and reproaches him with the injustice of his outrages: “Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same

* St. Luke, xxiii. 39.

condemnation. And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done no evil." Then turning, as much as he possibly could, towards Jesus: "Lord," said he, "remember me, when thou shalt come into thy kingdom."*

O admirable words! O prodigy of grace! What! is that the villain who was himself but now insulting the divine Victim? Why, his language shows that he has in him all the virtues that make holy penitents: and, in fact, he has the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom,† and he seeks to inspire it in his companion: "Neither dost thou fear God." He has the zeal of an apostle, and his zeal proves the sincerity of his conversion; he is humble and contrite, loudly confessing his sins and accepting, in expiation, the torments he endures on the cross; he is full of hope, and perfectly resigned to the will of God.

What is especially admirable in him, is the faith which he professes openly and solemnly: how sublime it is! how lofty! how well it shows the prodigious, the supreme, efficacy of grace!

And, in reality, what does he behold externally in Jesus? A man fastened like himself to an ignominious gibbet, outraged, covered with shame and opprobrium, naked, crowned with thorns, suffering the greatest exhaustion, about to die the death of a felon; and yet in that man he recognizes Christ, the Son of the living God; he venerates him as a King seated on a throne; he adores him as though he contemplated him radiant with his divine splendor! . . .

* St. Luke, xxiii. 40-42.

† Ps., cx. 10.

Yes ! when the apostles, who had seen the dead come forth from the grave at the voice of Jesus, totter in their faith, a thief who sees him tortured with himself, confesses his divinity ; and that at the very moment when the chief priests and the ancients of the people blaspheme against that adorable Savior, and insult him as though he had been the most wicked of men !

Let us admire this miracle of his infinite goodness. At this moment when he is the object of the sacrilegious insults of his enemies, he forgets himself to attend to the salvation of souls ; he offers one of the crucified thieves a powerful grace to which the latter hastens to correspond.

He is not ashamed to speak to a criminal justly condemned to capital punishment, and to tell him with surprising amiability : “ This day thou shalt be with me in paradise ; ” I will have thee for my companion, my friend, with whom I shall enter heaven. What condescension ! what generosity ! The penitent thief asks only a remembrance, and behold, Jesus grants him, that very day, a throne in his kingdom, an infinite happiness. . . .

O happy thief ! bless in the highest heavens him who dealt mercifully with you, and with the holy penitents celebrate his infinite goodness and clemency.

Alas ! the companion of your sins and of your torments does not imitate you ; he will not have the mercy which is offered to him likewise ; and, by his own fault, he is doomed to make manifest, in time and in eternity, the terrible justice exercised by the Supreme Judge on those who refuse to acknowledge him for the Supreme King.

Yes, on the cross Jesus reveals himself as supreme King and full of goodness, giving an everlasting kingdom to a penitent thief,—but also as a dreadful Judge condemning him who persists in resistance to his grace. . . . And that judgment which he exercises on Calvary, he exercises still and will exercise till the last day; every instant, he says to some penitent soul about to die: “This day thou shalt be with me in paradise;” and every instant he gives up, alas! to their reprobate sense, those who resist his final graces and so prefer death in sin to their conversion!

This judgment he will exercise on all men, when, seated on a throne of glory and having the good on his right and the wicked on his left, he shall say to the former: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you;”* and to the latter: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”†

APPLICATION.

Two sentiments, of a very opposite nature, ought to be excited in us by the meditation we have been making—confidence and fear.

Whatsoever may be a man's sins, he may always hope for mercy, and obtain it by a generous correspondence with grace: though he had worn out his life in crime, and were on the point of appearing before his Judge, he may still say what the Church sings in the Office for the dead: “Thou, . . . by absolving of the thief, hast given me hope.”‡

* St. Matt., xxv. 34.

† *Ibid.*, 41.

‡ *Prose Dies iræ.*

And if it be so for even the most infamous sinners, what should be the confidence of a Religious who, at the bottom of his heart, has always cherished the desire of going to God and promoting his glory !

Nevertheless, the subject on which we meditate is very proper to inspire us with a salutary fear : this example of a great sinner converted at death is, in fact, the only one of which mention is clearly made in the Holy Scripture. If, considering the great mercy shown to the good thief, our hearts are opened to a boundless hope, reflecting on the fate of the companion of his torment, they should be penetrated with fear : for he, too, was crucified with Jesus, the witness of his patience, included in his prayer, associated in his sacrifice, placed near Mary a short distance from the cross, perhaps even sprinkled with the blood of redemption ; and yet he becomes obdurate and is lost, notwithstanding the interior touches of grace and the rebuke of the penitent thief ; and that on the very day when earth is reconciled with heaven, and divine grace flows in torrents.

Yes, let us hope, since the good thief was converted at death ; but let us also fear, for, in the same circumstances, the bad thief was lost !

Let us be docile to the salutary invitations of grace ; it never fails us, neither let us fail it. Let us practise as we ought, the virtues manifested in the penitent thief : fear of God, zeal, humility, contrition, hope, resignation. . . . By this means we shall merit that Jesus may one day address to us, likewise, those words of supreme felicity : “ This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

PRAYER.

O amiable Jesus, divine Crucified, cast a look of compassion on my terror-stricken soul ! Oh ! how I dread to become one day thine enemy, and, like the bad thief, to disown thee and die in sin ! Lord ! I beseech thee by thy cross, by thy blood, have mercy on me and inspire me with the sentiments whereby the good thief found favor in thy sight. I, too, O my generous Redeemer ! entreat thee to remember me in thy kingdom and call me to reign there with thee.

I ask it through the intercession of thy divine Mother, and in the name of the sufferings she endured at the foot of thy cross.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 405.)

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

JESUS GIVES US MARY FOR OUR MOTHER.

“Woman, behold thy son.”—St. John, xix. 26.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our adorable Redeemer on the cross about to consummate his immolation. Let us adore him in union with Mary, the beloved disciple, and the holy women, who have followed him to Calvary, and stand as near him as the guards permit. Let us hear—reflecting on the circumstances in which he pronounces them—the new and mysterious words which he allows to escape his divine lips.

He is on the cross, and stripped of all, possessing only a little blood which he yields drop by drop ; for, from the moment when, by anticipation, he gave himself to his disciples in instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist, he sacrificed all ; and the moment approaches when he will give up life itself.

Mary is standing near the cross, contemplating her Divine Son a prey to every torture, regarding one by one the wounds wherewith he is covered, lending an ear to every sigh he heaves, feeling by compassion all his sufferings and humiliations, abiding in an ecstasy of deepest grief. She is crucified with her Son. What agony ! dying she lives, living she dies ! Yes, she dies,

in her heart as a mother, a death more painful than natural death.

At this moment, when the new Adam restores what the first destroyed, the new Eve repairs the mischief wrought by the first. Jesus associates with himself Mary, his mother; he makes her a participator in the infinite sufferings by which he satisfies for guilty humanity. With him she immolates herself, and immolates herself for us, thus contributing to the work of our salvation.

O Mary! who can comprehend thy desolation! It is as "great as the sea,"* and high as the heavens. Ah! it is indeed at this moment that thou couldst say: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow!"†

With Mary there stands by the cross St. John, the beloved disciple, the virgin, the apostle of charity, the confidant of the heart of Jesus—he who, at supper, reclined on the breast of his adorable Master. He alone, of all the apostles, had ascended Calvary to share in the supreme sorrows of the divine Victim whom love sacrifices for us.

Jesus, with a languid eye that is soon to be extinguished in the shades of death, looks upon his blessed Mother and the beloved disciple; and addressing Mary, he says, referring to St. John: "Woman, behold thy Son." Then, addressing St. John in reference to Mary, he says: "Behold thy Mother."‡

O words sublime in their simplicity! what love they express! what prodigies they work!

* Lament., ii. 13. † *Ibid.*, i. 12. ‡ St. John, xix. 26, 27.

Jesus substitutes St. John in his place to take care of his divine Mother, to protect and assist her as St. Joseph had done.

He rewards him for his charity, his purity, his fidelity, by giving him that which he leaves dearest in this world,—that which is the ark of the new covenant, the treasure of heaven, the Queen of angels. What an inheritance! Oh! what tenderness was in the heart of Jesus for that privileged disciple!

But what tenderness he has for us all, for it is to us all that he gives Mary as a mother!

We were represented in the person of St. John. Jesus accomplishing the work of redemption, ceased not to have in view the humanity he came to ransom. In praying for his executioners, he prayed for all sinners; in pardoning the good thief, he regarded in his mercy all true penitents; so, in giving Mary to St. John to be his mother, he gives her to all the faithful.

Yes, it is we who are in question. It is of us Jesus thinks on the cross, at this moment when he suffers his greatest torments, and when Mary suffers with him. He thinks of us to give us his only remaining good, his divine Mother. It is of each one of us that he speaks, saying: "Woman, behold thy son!"

Divine Savior, in what a sublime manner thou fulfill-est thy promise not to leave us orphans! Thou remain-est with us in thy sacrament, O tenderest of Fathers, and thou givest us Mary for our mother! What have we, then, to desire, and why should we not unceasingly exalt thy generous love?

Jesus said "Woman," and not "Mother," to remind

us that he addresses himself to that woman of whom the holy books speak,* and by whose co-operation Eve's transgression was to be repaired ; to announce more clearly that he acts then as God, and is about to pronounce a final sentence which he wishes to be fully accomplished ; to signify that there is question of a real substitution, and that Mary is, thenceforth, to place all her affection on those whom he gives her for children.

Such is really the case ; the word of Jesus is a divine and all-powerful word, which works out what it signifies. Mary has no sooner heard it than she feels all the sentiments of tenderness, kindness, love, belonging to a mother ; she feels her heart dilate so as to embrace all Christian generations in the same affection ; she feels that she is our mother, not only by appointment, but also by love and inclination.

Behold her adopting us for her children, and saying to Jesus, by her dispositions, as she had said to the angel Gabriel: "Be it done unto me according to thy word."†

St. John, acting in our name, acknowledges her for his mother, and Jesus seals with his blood the contract of our adoption, so glorious and so advantageous to us.

APPLICATION.

Jesus established his holy Mother as our mother ; what a motive for blessing him, for celebrating his tenderness to us ! A mother is given to us, and that mother is Mary !

* Gen., iii. 15.

† St. Luke, i. 38.

Let us glory in our quality of Christians, by which we are made children of Mary; what motives we have for doing so! She that is our mother, is the Virgin the Mother of God, the Queen of heaven and earth, the treasurer of grace, the highest, the noblest, the most perfect, of mere creatures.

Mary is our Mother. Let us love her, after God, with all the love of which we are capable, and show ourselves always her worthy children. Let her image, her name, her memory, be unceasingly before our mind.

Let us seek only to please her, and, to that end, accomplish faithfully what she enjoins in those words: "Whatsoever my Son shall say to ye, do ye."*

Let us often call to mind the circumstances under which our adoption as children of Mary took place; and let the sorrows which that august Virgin then endured, be the foundation of our filial love and the support of our confidence.

Mary loves us and desires our happiness; and, on the other hand, she is all-powerful with her divine Son who, in establishing her as our Mother, established her as our protectress: let us count, then, on her assistance, and never cease to have recourse to it.

As Religious, beloved disciples of the Savior, it is to us particularly that Mary was given for Mother. By the grace of our vocation, Jesus told us in a special manner, in reference to Mary: "Behold thy Mother." St. John's happiness is, therefore, ours likewise.

* St. John, ii. 5.

Ah ! let us comprehend it as he did, and be like him devoted to the glory of her who ought to be the object of our tenderest affection, and whom we are so happy to call our good Mother.

PRAAYER.

O Mary ! remember that I am the child of thy sorrows from the day when Jesus, dying, revealed to us that thou art the Mother of all Christians. Oh ! permit me to pour forth my heart into thine, and to say, and say unceasingly : “ Yes, I love thee, I honor thee, I bless thee, O my good, my gracious, my tender Mother ; permit that I may express to thee with affection, the tenderness, devotion, confidence, my soul feels for thee.”

O Mary who art still the Mother of Jesus Christ, our God, and who hast all power over him, present to him our prayers and supplications ; tell him to hear us—we who are likewise thy children and his adopted brothers ! Obtain that we may profit by the great sacrifice of Calvary in which thou didst co-operate, so that, at the moment of our death, Jesus may say to us, pointing to thee : “ Behold thy Mother ; ” and that he may admit us to participate in thine ineffable joys.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 405.)

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

ABANDONMENT OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—
St. Matt., xxvii. 46.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us adore our Lord Jesus Christ suffering his greatest pains on the cross. Let us contemplate him in union with his divine but desolate Mother, standing near the altar whereon he sacrifices himself. Let us fix our eyes on his crown of thorns, on his pale brow bedewed with the sweat of his last agony, on his face covered with blood and dust, on his livid lips, his failing tearful eyes, his heaving chest, the wounds with which his whole body is covered; let us fix them particularly on these of his hands and feet.

Let us think of what he suffers in his soul, at this moment when he is the object of all contempt, and when, as in his agony in the Garden of Olives, he represents to himself the great number of sinners who will trample on the blood of redemption.

His enemies have still the same hatred for him, while he manifests in their regard only the most generous, the most heroic love. The waters of tribulation wherewith they have inundated him, have in no degree quenched the

fire of charity* which consumes his divine heart. He has still the same desire for their salvation. Hence, in order to bring them to reflect on the magnitude of the crime they are committing, and to lead them into the way of repentance, he so wills it that a convulsion of nature symbolizes the moral convulsion of which they are the authors; and that even inanimate creatures testify their horror of the deicide which is about being consummated.

Thick darkness overspreads the whole earth and wraps it, as it were, in a mantle of mourning; the sun veils his splendor; hearts are seized with fear; the blasphemous words of the Pharisees are succeeded by a terrified silence; all the enemies of the Savior feel themselves under the dominion of a superior power which, by the voice of the elements, reproaches them with their crimes.

But alas! they do not enter into themselves, and they persist in their criminal dispositions.

Oh! What a subject of pain for Jesus! There is nothing to console him; there is no alleviation of his sufferings, or rather all combines to aggravate them. He is, in the most absolute sense, "the Man of Sorrows."† According to the expression of Holy Writ, he has to tread alone the wine press‡ of divine justice, to expiate our iniquities, the responsibility of which he has taken upon him before his Father; and it is on this account that he suffers the greatest, the most heart-rending pain,—that of abandonment on the part of his Father himself. Ah! let us behold him casting a look heavenward expressing all the distress of his soul, and

* Cant., viii. 7.

† Isa., liii. 3.

‡ *Ibid.*, lxiii. 3.

hear him saying: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What grief is manifested by these mysterious words, and what a lesson they contain! Till then Jesus uttered no complaint. In allowing this one to escape him, he makes us understand that his sufferings go on increasing, that they are accumulating, being heaped upon him; he reveals to us that the chalice he drains is more and more bitter, that the agony of Calvary is even more overwhelming than that of Gethsemane.

By these words, he invites us to reflect on the cause of his sufferings:—"My God," he says, "why hast thou forsaken me?" But he had already said by David: "My iniquities are gone over my head; and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me."* Now, those sins are ours; and so it is we who are the cause of his abandonment. .

By offending God, we have deserved that he should depart from us, that he should leave us to our misery, to our weakness, to the fury of the enemies of our souls. Now God sees all unfaithful mankind in his Son who is clothed in the form of a sinner, and hence he appears to abandon him and to close his ears to his groans.

Jesus suffers that abandonment, to merit for us that we may not be abandoned by divine justice to the pain of loss, so justly due to our sins; and which is, of all others, the most rigorous, the most hopeless. Oh! what gratitude do we not owe to the generous Redeemer who suffered it in our place!

In crying out on the cross, "My God, my God, why

* Ps., xxxvii. 5.

hast thou forsaken me?"—Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah announced by the prophets, for these words are none other than the first of the psalm in which are best depicted the sorrows he was to endure, and in which he had traced, a thousand years before, the aspect under which he presents himself at this very moment.

"My God," he had said by the prophet-king,* "look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me? O my God, I shall cry by day, and thou wilt not hear. . . . But thou dwellest in the holy place. . . I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. . . My God, depart not from me; for tribulation is very near, for there is none to help me. . . I am poured out like water; and all my bones are scattered. My heart is become like wax melting, my strength is dried up like a potsherd. . . . They have pierced my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones. . . . They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots. But thou, O Lord, remove not thy help to a distance from me; look towards my defence."

APPLICATION.

Yes; Jesus is indeed, as the prophets saw him, suffering all manner of pains, abandoned by all, a prey to the most incalculable, the most bitter, the most acute agony of soul and body.

Let us adore him suffering the pain of abandonment on the part of God his Father. Let us often call to

* Ps., xxi. 1-20.

mind that he suffers it for us, on our account, in our place, to merit for us that we may not be abandoned by God.

Let us suffer spiritual aridity in union with Jesus forsaken. There are for us, as for all men, hours of weariness, painful moments when earth seems marble and heaven brass; when our mind, shrouded in darkness, appears unable to conceive, or form a pious thought; moments when the soul, with a sense of great suffering, cries out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Well! let us then remember the abandonment of Jesus on the cross, and in union with him remain patient and resigned.

Let us act in the same way when we are forsaken, abandoned, outraged even on the part of men: let us bear it for the love of Our Divine Savior, and for the expiation of our faults.

Let us reflect on the state of our conscience; and if we are, unfortunately, in disgrace with God, let us hear our suffering Jesus, saying to us: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Ah! he also says so to us when we are in tepidity, when we do not visit him in his Sacrament, when we do not adore him within ourselves, when we are heedless of his presence. He says so to us when we do not exercise charity towards our brethren, towards our pupils.

Let us cease, then, to give him cause to say so. Whatsoever our trials may be, let us be always his, and devoted to his service.

PRAYER.

It is just, O my Divine Savior ! that I suffer something of what thou didst suffer ; that I participate, at least to a certain degree, in the chalice which I ought to drink entire. I resign myself, therefore, to suffer whatsoever thou wilt ; and, if it be thy will, to feel only spiritual dryness and aridity. Oh ! why should I aspire to interior consolations—I who have sinned so often, and who have so many times deserved to be forsaken by God for ever ?

No, no, Lord ! I ask thee not for those joys of the soul wherewith thou sometimes rewardest thy saints on earth, but for patience to endure the privation of them ; and if thou wilt that I remain with thee on the cross, that I suffer all my life the being deprived of all sensible consolation, I willingly accept that trial, O my Jesus ! in the thought that I shall thereby become more like to thee ; and that one day, in the abode where pain and sorrow are not, thou wilt make me enjoy the supreme felicity which the possession of God produces in souls.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 406.)

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

JESUS SUFFERING THIRST.

“I thirst.”—St. John, xix. 28.

CONSIDERATION.

FOR more than twelve hours has Jesus been a prey to every suffering without receiving any relief, without having taken any nourishment, without even a moment's rest. His agony in the garden of Olives, the ill usage he received in the streets of Jerusalem, in the house of Caiaphas, in the palace of Herod, his scourging, his crowning with thorns, the outrages heaped upon him by the governor's soldiers, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion, the effusion of his blood on the wood of his sacrifice,—have exhausted all his strength, so that if it were not through a miracle, he would be already dead.

And now he feels the most burning thirst. An inward fire consumes him, and thus adds to the frightful torments to which he is a prey.

Ah! it is at this moment that he can repeat what he had said by the mouth of David: “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; . . . and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws. I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered.”*

* Ps., xxi. 16; ci. 5.

Let us fix our eyes on our divine Savior suffering the torment of excessive thirst: let us contemplate his parched lips, his inflamed mouth opening to breathe a little cooling air. Let us hear his difficult breathing, and read in his eyes the violence of the fever that consumes him.

What sick person is there—even the poorest—who has not, in his last moments, at least a little water to quench his thirst? Well! what all have at their command Our Divine Savior has not; he is deprived of it at the very moment when he most needs it.

Yes, Christian souls, at this moment, the Lamb immolated for us is wholly consumed on the altar of holocaust, and expiates, by a particular torment, the sins that men have committed by the sense of taste; at this moment, he who is the Source of living waters, the mystic Fountain of eternal life, feels a devouring thirst; at this moment, the God who created the immensity of waves, is reduced to such a point as to long for some drops of water.

Oh! how great is the pain of our beloved Savior! . . . and he endures it for several hours, without complaining, without even making it known.

Yet, now when about to die, he is going to manifest it, in order to inspire us with horror for the sins of sensuality he is expiating, and also to accomplish what he had foretold of himself: "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

He says, "I thirst;" and immediately, as if in fulfilment of the prophecy, one of the soldiers dips a sponge in vinegar, puts it on the end of a reed, and

offers it to him; and our adorable Savior presses his divine lips to it. . .

“What!” exclaims St. Augustine, “the God of goodness who provides for us the coolness of water and the sweetness of honey, receives from the hands of men only vinegar for drink!”

Ah! like that great saint, let us be astonished and indignant at so much cruelty on the part of the enemies of our divine Redeemer. Yet, let us raise our hearts and minds to other considerations that lead us farther into the spirit of the mystery of the thirst of Jesus on the cross.

This thirst which Jesus feels on the cross is real, and it is one of the greatest torments he has endured; but it is also symbolical, and it is especially under this second aspect that it imports us to regard it.

By the words “I thirst,” Jesus manifests how much he desires the glory of God his Father, the conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just, our advancement in perfection, the establishment and reign of his Church.

The cry, “I thirst,” is that of his heart which is consumed by the fire of charity, and wishing that we may return him love for love, sacrifice for sacrifice, and that we may all obtain the salvation he merits for us by his sufferings and death.

Oh! if we conceived what that thirst of Jesus was, with what eagerness we would respond to his call! how we would hasten to offer him the pure water that he asks! with what fidelity we would correspond with his graces, and apply ourselves to become daily more perfect, to maintain and develop in our hearts the fire of

holy love! with what zeal we would labor for the salvation of souls.

Yes, Jesus on the cross was devoured by the thirst for souls; and that thirst he still feels.

Let us contemplate him in his holy tabernacle, and ask ourselves what desires are in his heart, what he wants of us. Ah! we shall hear him say on the altar as on the cross, "I thirst;" I burn to see men glorify my Father, depart from the way of evil, escape the tyranny of the devil, abandon error, attach themselves to truth alone, labor with ardor on the work of their salvation, apply to themselves the fruits of my sacrifice, and merit to participate in the eternal glory I have acquired for them.

APPLICATION.

Jesus says to us, "I thirst;" but what effect will those words have on our soul? Shall they leave us insensible, indifferent? or shall they excite in our hearts the compassion they ought to inspire, and, above all, lead us to accomplish what they make known to us of our divine Master's will?

Jesus says to us, "I thirst;"—well! what are we going to offer him? Shall it be the pure water of sanctity, the generous wine of charity? or shall it be the vinegar and gall of tepidity, or, perhaps, infidelity?

In this latter case, how unhappy we should be; how cruel to him and to us; how unworthy of the benefits wherewith he loads us! Imitators of the Jews, we should deserve to have the fate of the Jews,—to be rejected by God. . .

No, no, let it not be so. Animated by love and gratitude, let us hasten to satisfy the desires of the heart of Jesus.

Let us devote ourselves joyfully and unreservedly for the greater glory of God the Father, and promote it with the most active and perfect zeal. Let us labor with all our strength to make that good Master, to whom we have consecrated ourselves, known, loved, and served.

Let us pray with fervor for the conversion of sinners, for the preservation of the innocence of children, for the increase of piety in our brothers, for the maintenance of regularity in our communities.

Above all, let us labor with courage and constancy at our own perfection, remembering that this is what is principally demanded of us by the divine Savior who has called us to his service. Let us behold in him our Master and our model, and imitate him. To that end let us embrace the practices of interior and exterior mortification; let us contradict our nature, crucify our passions, and when we suffer from any privation, remember that on the cross Jesus was deprived of all, and that in his thirst he had only vinegar to drink. . .

PRAYER.

O Jesus, divine Lamb, whom I contemplate and adore on the altar of holocaust! O holy Victim who dost consume thyself for the glory of thy heavenly Father and to save us! I have heard thee cry, "I thirst;" I have understood that thou dost manifest by those mysterious words the greatness of the torment thou endurest, and

also thy desire that all men may apply to themselves the merits of thy sacrifice, and work out their salvation!

Grant me, then, O Lord! to enter into the spirit of the mystery on which thou callest me to meditate, to compassionate with all my heart the excessive suffering thou dost feel, to deplore the cruelty of the Jews who refuse thee even a little water. Give me to understand well with all thy saints, that thou dost thirst after my perfection; and, especially, to satisfy that thirst, by advancing courageously and constantly towards the term whereto thou callest me, and which I hope to attain by the help of the grace thou didst merit for me on the cross.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 406.)

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

JESUS SAYS: "ALL IS CONSUMMATED."

"When Jesus had taken the vinegar, he said, 'All is consummated.'"—St. John, xix. 30.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us go, Christian souls, to Calvary, to the foot of the Cross, whereon Jesus is soon to expire. Let us cast our eyes on that Adorable Victim, at the moment when the bloody Sacrifice of our reconciliation is about to end. Let us hear our divine Master, speaking with a strong voice those words so rich in salutary teachings: "All is consummated."

Let us meditate on them attentively, and animate ourselves with the different meanings they present.

"All is consummated!"—I have accomplished all that my Father had decreed for me, and which, as God, I had determined to accomplish. I have done the will of him who sent me; I have become obedient even unto death, and the death of the cross. I have fulfilled in every point the mission given me from above.

"All is consummated!"—My blood has all flowed through the wounds wherewith my body is covered; my strength is exhausted; I am suffering my last pains; my life is ending; behold the moment when I am going to allow death to strike me.

“All is consummated!”—I consider what the Prophets have written of me, and what the Jewish worship prefigured, and I see that every thing relating to me is realized.

Yes, I have accomplished all that was revealed of the Messiah: I have been a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity;* my apparel has been red with my blood;† I have borne the iniquity of all;‡ my enemies, like furious bulls, have besieged me;§ I have paid that which I took not away;|| waters have flowed over my head;¶ I, the Root of Jesse, have stood for an ensign of the people;** I have been lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert;†† my garments have been divided by lot.‡‡ They have given me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.§§

“All is consummated!”—Figurative religion has ceased; the ancient sacrifices give place to the only true sacrifice predicted by these words: “In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation.”|||

“All is consummated!”—The bloody sacrifice of the New Law is ended, the world is redeemed; I have done all that divine justice required; I have wrought an abundant and superabundant redemption; I have amply satisfied for all the sins of men; I have paid the price of their ransom; they are now reconciled with God; the

* Isa., liii. 3. † *Ibid.*, lxiii. 2. ‡ *Ibid.*, liii. 6. § Ps., xxi. 13. || *Ibid.*, lxviii. 5. ¶ Lament., iii. 54. ** Isa., xi. 10. †† St. John, iii. 14. ‡‡ Ps., xxi. 19. §§ *Ibid.*, lxviii. 22. ||| Mal., i. 11.

sentence of their condemnation is annulled; the gates of Paradise are about to be opened to them.

“All is consummated!”—I triumph over death and hell; the hour of the powers of darkness is past; I reign henceforth by this wood to which my enemies have fastened me. This is the sceptre of my power, before which all heads shall bow.

“All is consummated!”—The law of grace has replaced the law of fear; the expectation of nations is fulfilled; I have done for men all that my heart inspired; the infinite treasures of my merits are acquired for them; nothing is wanting for their sanctification and salvation; I have finished the work for which I came on this earth.

Light has shone in darkness. Every belief necessary for humanity, is revealed; my holy Church, which is the pillar of truth, is founded for all time; my religion is established, and will overspread the whole earth to make the most heroic virtues grow and flourish. From my feet and hands go forth four rivers of blood which, like the four rivers of the terrestrial paradise, are going to fertilize the world, and to call forth apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, penitents, saints, in such numbers that no one can count them.

“All is consummated!”—I have gone through—without giving way to either impatience or discouragement—a career the most painful, the most thwarted by the contradictions of men. I have been constant even unto death, and from the term which I have now reached, I teach all Christians that it is not enough to enter on the way of salvation, but that they must persevere even to the end to merit being crowned.

APPLICATION.

Reflecting on the different meanings of these words, "All is consummated," let us impress well on our minds what Jesus suffered; let us regard the web of his sorrows from his Incarnation till the moment which is about to end them; let us measure, as much as we possibly can, the cup of bitterness he drained. . .

Let us then reflect that it was for us he suffered, and ask ourselves what sentiments of gratitude ought to animate our heart, and what works they ought to make us produce.

Kneeling at the foot of the cross whereon the adorable Victim of our redemption is shedding all his blood, let us renounce sin, and renounce it for ever. Let us weep those sins which we have committed; let us ask pardon through the merits of the superabundant satisfaction of the Divine Savior, and do real penance for them.

All is accomplished on the part of Jesus in the work of our salvation; but not on ours. Members of his mystic body, we must participate in his sufferings, we must courageously embrace the practice of mortification, so that we may say with the Apostle: "I fill up, in my flesh, those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ."*

Let us prepare ourselves, by a holy and penitential life, for the supreme moment when he shall say to us: "All is consummated." Happy if we are then in the grace of God!

* Col., i. 24.

“All is consummated,” says the just man dying; that is to say: “My troubles are over, my trials are at an end, the reward I had in view is now before me. It required efforts, it is true, to be humble, obedient, mortified, faithful to all my duties; but, now, nothing remains of my troubles save a consoling remembrance. God is preparing for me a throne of glory, and will give me for my portion the true freedom of his children. Called to the Heavenly Jerusalem, I am going to enjoy the vision of my God, to contemplate forever the holy humanity of my divine Redeemer, to dwell in heaven with Mary, to sing with the Angels and Saints the eternal hymn of gratitude. O happiness! all is consummated. ‘I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course: I have kept the faith; for the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice.’”*

“All is consummated,” shall the dying sinner say: “My life is at an end: pleasures, honors, riches, luxuries, banquets, worldly joys—all is over, all is ended for me! I leave all I have loved, and I take with me only the sins of which I am guilty, and which shall be the cause of my condemnation. . . . ‘All is consummated.’ Hell is henceforth my only portion. I have now to begin that fiery torture, which is never to end.”

Soon shall we, too, say: “All is consummated!” Shall it be to express that we have done all that God ordained for us—all that he had demanded for us by our holy Rules—all that he had prescribed to us by our superiors? or, on the contrary, shall it be to say that we

* 2 Tim., iv. 7, 8.

have abused his graces, that we have not profited by the means of salvation he offers us in our state? . . .

Let us think that that depends on the life we now lead, and on that we may lead in future.

PRAYER.

Lord! continue and consummate my salvation; it is thy work, it is worthy of thee, O, my divine Redeemer! and it cost thee too dear to leave it imperfect. I know that thy holy passion, wholly consummated as it is on thy part, will not open heaven at the moment of my death if I do not bear thy image in myself, and if I do not, by the practice of mortification, participate in thy pains. Oh! I beseech thee, by the merits of thy sufferings and death, grant that, in imitation of the apostle, I may keep the faith in all its purity, that I may sustain it by good works, and that I may finish my course in the way of good.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 407.)

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

JESUS COMMENDS HIS SOUL TO HIS FATHER.

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”—
St. Luke, xxiii. 46.

CONSIDERATION.

BEHOLD the final moment when the loveliest, the holiest, the most admirable life that ever was, is about to end in the most ignominious death. Our Divine Redeemer is going to finish on the cross the long and painful combat he was to fight for our salvation. He has nothing more to do but return to his heavenly Father, to rest after his innumerable toils and sufferings in his glorious bosom.

Yet, before dying, or rather when dying, he speaks still to men and instructs them in the most sublime manner. Let us gather around his feet, Christian souls, and listen with sentiments of the most profound adoration to his last words, which he speaks in a strong voice, as if to impress them deeply on our minds, to engage us to meditate upon them in our heart, and to repeat them after him.

The Gospel relates that Jesus, after having said, “All is consummated!” cries out: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Jesus addresses his Father: he does not say as

before, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but rather, manifesting the greatest confidence. "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

These words, which are, as it were, the last clause of his Testament, are also a perfect act of adoration from his holy humanity to God his Father. In the supper, Jesus gave to men his body and blood under the species of bread and wine; on Calvary, he bequeathed to them his Blessed Mother, at the same time that he sacrificed his life for them. He has nothing left but his soul, and he offers it to him from whom he received it—to God who is the beginning of all things, and to whom all that has its origin in him, must return.

Oh! how lovingly the celestial Father receives that soul which Jesus resigns into his hands—that soul hypostatically united to the Word, radiant with all the splendor of the Word—that soul which infinitely loved and glorified him—that soul which had no thought, no desire, no will but for him.

By the soul which dying Jesus confides to his Father, let us understand not only this perfect and divine spirit which, with his sacred body, constitutes his holy humanity, but likewise all the faithful who are united to this divine Savior; for, says St. Paul, "he who adheres to the Lord, is one spirit with him."*

Thus, as St. Athanasius affirms, when the Son of God commends his soul into the hands of his Father, he commends to him at that same time all those who are his members, and who live by his life.

* 1 Cor., vi. 17.

Oh! what ought not our gratitude to be to Jesus, our divine Head! He commended our soul to his Father, he resigned it into his hands! God, who hears him always,* will receive it, therefore, into the bosom of his infinite goodness; he will preserve it, will load it with joy and bliss, and will, one day, re-unite it to our body, to make it through it living and glorious.

Let us then re-animate our hope. Jesus is our Head and our model; what he does in that capacity he enjoins on us to do, and has merited for us that grace. We, too, can therefore say with sweet security at the moment of death: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and having the most entire confidence that God will receive that soul, as he received that of his adorable Son, with which it is united by the bond of charity.

Jesus Christ is our Redeemer—he destroyed sin which sets enmity between God and our souls; there is then nothing now to prevent the latter from being admitted by God after death, from entering immediately into possession of the infinite happiness they are called to enjoy: each one of us may now desire, with St. Paul, to be loosened from the bonds of this body,† to go to dwell with Jesus in the bosom of the heavenly Father.

Jesus Christ is our Master: in crying on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he teaches us that death is not destruction, but only a separation of the soul from the body; that our soul, coming from God, is to return to God; that the acceptance of death is truly an act of adoration whereby we

* St. John, xi. 42.

† Phil., i. 23.

acknowledge God as the Sovereign Lord of all things, as our beginning and our end, as he from whom we have received our soul and to whom we ought to yield it up.

Jesus, by these words, makes us understand that of itself death is not to be dreaded ; that it is, in reality, but the happy moment when the faithful Christian gives back his soul into the hands of him from whom he received it ; when he returns to his Father and casts himself lovingly into his merciful arms ; when he says in union with Jesus who, then especially, assists him with his grace, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ;" remember that it is the breath of thy mouth, the price of thy Son's blood, the fruit of his labors. Vouchsafe, I beseech thee, to welcome it kindly into the bosom of thy clemency.

Happy the Christian who, in his last moments, is in these dispositions ! He does sweet violence to God by this absolute confidence ; he unites with the dying Jesus whose merits he applies to himself ; he begins with the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," the song of gratitude which he will continue in heaven.

APPLICATION.

Let us often think of the final hour when our soul shall be demanded back. Ah ! it ought to be, so to say, the whole occupation of Christians to dispose themselves for rendering an account of their life to God on the day when he shall end it ! That day will soon come for each of us : let us think of it and be ready.

When we shall press to our dying lips the image of

the crucifix, it will suggest to us to say, and will say in our name, those words of Jesus on the cross, which form a part of the prayers for the agonizing: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" but, that we may pronounce them then with confidence, we must repeat them frequently with piety during the course of our life, and making interiorly the abandonment of ourselves to God.

We must say to him, from the bottom of our heart: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," with all its thoughts, its desires, its fears. Dispose of me according to thy will: I abandon myself to thy Providence. Whatever may be the state in which thou placest me, the trials thou mayst send me, the tribulations I may have to undergo, I bless thy holy name.

We must imitate Jesus Christ, do exactly and lovingly all that his Father demands of us, to put ourselves by his grace in a state to be able to say with him: "All is consummated," all is accomplished that was commanded us.

We must unite more and more with that divine mediator, establish ourselves in his charity, and persevere therein, live by his life, act as he would act in our place, animate ourselves with the same motives, propose to ourselves the same ends.

We must make but one with him, so that our soul belonging truly to his mystic soul and being in one sense his, he may say of it, at the moment of our death: "Father, into thy hands I commend this soul which is mine and which I have saved."

Let us earnestly ask of him the grace of that union

with him by which his Father, seeing him in us, will receive our soul as he received his, and admit him amongst the blessed souls and the angelic hosts, in the abode of eternal rest.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, adorable victim ! remember that on the cross thou didst recommend my soul to God in recommending to him those of all who believe in thee, and who are thy members : ah ! I beseech thee by thy wounds, by thy blood, by thy death, grant that thy prayer may have its full efficacy in me.

O my Savior ! save my soul ; consider it as being thine ; and, at my death, come, O generous Redeemer ! to take it and present it to God, telling him to receive it into the bosom of his infinite clemency. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 407.)

FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS.

“Bowing his head, he gave up the ghost.”—St. John, xix. 30.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us go in spirit to Calvary; let us draw near to the cross which is the altar of the great sacrifice, and let us keep our eyes fixed on the Divine Lamb expiring on that gibbet to take away the sins of the world.

Behold the final moment; the bloody sacrifice of our reconciliation with God is drawing to a close; he who is at once the priest and the victim gives himself up to death. “Jesus,” says the evangelist, “bowing his head, gave up the ghost.” Oh! what a subject is offered to our meditation! what lessons are there given us! what sentiments ought such a spectacle to excite in our hearts!

Jesus bows his head to show that he adores the decrees of heaven, that he resigns himself to death, that he accepts it in order to accomplish the will of his father, as St. Paul remembers, saying: “He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* He bows his head to permit death to strike him; for death, as St. Athanasius says, would not have dared to approach the Lord of life, if he had

* Phil., ii. 8.

not himself called him. Finally, he bows his head to give us all the kiss of peace and reconciliation.

Jesus bows his head, and dies. . . Jesus is dead! Ah! what a subject for astonishment, regret, and tears! Jesus is dead! he, the author of life, the Father of the world to come, the Son of the living God. . . Jesus is dead! he, our master, he, the spouse of our souls, the only object of our love! and he is dead on the cross!

O Christian souls, contemplate on the wood to which it is fastened, the sacred body of your Divine Savior; behold that head weighed down and hanging earthwards, that motionless brow, those darkened eyes, that closed mouth. Contemplate that face so beautiful, which reflected a divine soul, now pale and disfigured. "Consider," says St. Bonaventure, "that crown of thorns and those murderous nails, those wounds in the hands and feet, that body covered over with wounds, that mangled flesh, and see by these tokens how much Jesus has loved thee."

Yes, let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus dead on the cross. Let us contemplate him in union with Mary, the most desolate of all mothers, and suffering, at this moment especially, the greatest sorrow that ever was. Let us contemplate him, like Magdalen, with sentiments of the most ardent love, and of the liveliest repentance for our faults, which are the true cause of his death. Let us contemplate him, like the soldiers who crucified him, and who, as soon as he expired, strike their breasts and confess that he is truly the Son of God.

Jesus is God! But why was it necessary that his life should be thus sacrificed? Wherefore did he die,

—he the author of life, and innocence itself? Ah! it is that he would, by an effect of his charity and generosity, pay to God his Father an infinite homage, in reparation for the outrages we have offered to that divine Majesty; it is that he would deliver us from the death we had merited, open to us the heaven that was closed since the first sin, confirm the testament he had made in our favor, and put us in possession of all the treasures of his grace.

Jesus is dead, because we are sinners and he has had pity on us; because, notwithstanding our sins, he has loved us, and loved us even to preferring us to himself: his death, therefore, is at once the work of our iniquity and of his love. Ah! how it ought to excite in our hearts the most perfect gratitude and contrition!

O Jesus! thy death is my work, wherefore it is that I will always deplore it; but it is also the work of thy charity for me, wherefore I will love thee, in return, with all the affection of which I am capable. I will open my heart to hope, for thy sacrifice is the beginning of my happiness, my reconciliation with God, my restoration to the state from which I had fallen by sin.

Jesus is dead—he who represented entire humanity: the warrant that condemned us all to die, has, therefore, been executed on him; but, henceforth, that warrant is annulled in regard to us; and, consequently, if we are united to Jesus Christ, the death we ought all to undergo is no longer as a punishment inflicted on us, but is rather a reward; since, by it, we enter on the enjoyment of the glory which that divine Redeemer has acquired for us.

Jesus is dead ! his work is, therefore, accomplished ; earth is reconciled with heaven ; God, whose justice is satisfied, sees again in men his beloved children ; the way of salvation is open to all peoples ; the Church is founded, the sacraments are instituted, the seed of truth is sown on earth, and fertilized by the divine blood that flowed, it is going to bud forth, to propagate itself, to overspread the whole earth ; the Jewish worship is abolished, the prophetic religion becomes objectless ; the ancient covenant is replaced by the New : thus the veil of the temple which concealed the tabernacle and the holy of holies, is suddenly rent from top to bottom—in fact, what use was that veil then, since the true Holy of Holies, elevated on the cross on Calvary, was before the eyes of the whole world ? . . .

APPLICATION.

Let us profoundly adore, on the wood to which he is fastened, Jesus dead for us ; and let us admire the ineffable prodigy of grace which is being wrought. O mystery which is to the Jews as a stumbling-block, and to the gentiles foolishness !* the Just One has sacrificed himself for sinners, the Master for the slaves ! A God is dead for man. . .

Yes, Jesus is dead for us ; but, furthermore, he is dead through us sinners, the true authors of his immolation. None amongst us can say : “I am innocent of the blood of this Just man.”†

Let us, then, bewail our transgressions, and make, at

* 1 Cor., i. 23.

† St. Matt., xxvii. 24.

the foot of the cross, the resolution of doing true penance, and of never more committing sin.

At the thought of the Savior's death, let us revive in our hearts the hope of pardon. Whatever may be our faults, let us trust that the heavenly Father will show us mercy, in virtue of the infinite merits of the death of his adorable Son.

Let us often represent to mind Jesus dead on the cross, because that image always produces salutary fruits in our souls; but let us particularly represent him to ourselves during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when as Priest and Victim, he continues to offer to God, for our salvation, that death he underwent on Calvary.

Let us place ourselves before that mysterious wood to which is fastened the body of him who "made himself a curse for us,"* and think of what love and what gratitude we owe him! . . .

Ah! how could we contemplate him on the cross without being penetrated with sentiments of the liveliest affection, without being led to devote ourselves unreservedly for him, and to have no other desire than to sacrifice ourselves for his glory!

Let us ask, through the merits of his death, a true spirit of penance, and the grace to grow in his charity till the moment when he shall call us to another life, to enjoy the fruits of his redemption.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! O my beloved Savior! whom I contemplate in the arms of death and on the bloody altar of Calvary,

* Gal., iii. 13.

behold the feelings that crowd upon me. Considering thee, my heart is breaking with regret, my soul breathes forth into sighs and groans; my tears furrow my cheeks and, like those of Magdalen, mingle with thy blood shed at the foot of the cross.

Yes, Lord! I understand how unhappy I have been in having offended thee. Ah! I will bewail my unfaithfulness, which has been the true cause of thy immolation, and I will always bewail them. But, O my Jesus! I will also open my heart to hope, for I know thou didst undergo death to restore me to life.

O divine Savior! give me to participate in the fruits of thine immolation. Remember, O good Jesus! that for me thou art on the cross, and reject me not. Grant, Lord! that my soul, which has cost thee so much, may be delivered from the evil from which thou came to deliver it; and that one day, in heaven, near thy glorious throne, O victorious Lamb! I may be admitted to do thee homage for the crown of my perseverance, and to sing with the saints the eternal canticle of gratitude and love.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 408.)

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE BODY OF JESUS PIERCED BY THE SPEAR.

“They shall look on him whom they pierced.”—
St. John, xix. 37.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS had said, speaking of the kind of death he was to undergo : “When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself;”* now at the very moment when he expires on the cross, he fulfils this prediction.

The veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom, to signify that all sacrifices are abolished, and that there is henceforth but one single sacrifice—that of the cross ; the earth trembles, the rocks are rent, sepulchres open ; even inanimate nature manifests its horror of the crime committed.

The centurion placed in front of the cross, and the soldiers who keep guard on Jesus, affrighted by what they see, give glory to God, saying, “Indeed, this was a just man;”† the multitude of spectators went away striking their breasts,‡ and deploring the deicide of which their nation was guilty.

So from this very moment, the Savior’s death pro-

* St. John, xii. 32. † St. Luke, xxiii. 47 ; St. Matt., xxvii. 54.

‡ St. Luke, xxiii. 48.

duces fruits of, sanctification. Jesus draws souls to himself by the way of penance; numberless graces come down from the cross on men who, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, "shall draw waters with joy from the Savior's fountains."*

These fountains are opened to them by each of the wounds of the divine Victim, and they are going to be more so still by that which shall be made in his heart, the source and plenitude of all graces.

Love had inspired every action of Jesus; love had led him to death, and to a death the most cruel and ignominious; but in him love is stronger than death, and he is going to manifest it in the most admirable manner.

The sabbath of the Pasch being about to commence, the Jews had asked Pilate to have the legs of Jesus and the thieves broken, so that the bodies might not remain exposed on a day so solemn.

Soldiers come, accordingly, and break the legs of both the thieves, in order to hasten their death. Coming to Jesus, they see that he is dead: they do not break his legs, thus accomplishing what was written of the Paschal Lamb, the figure of the divine Victim: "Neither shall you break a bone thereof."†

But it was likewise written: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;"‡ and those words are about to be fulfilled. A soldier approaches the cross, and, striking the body of Jesus in the side with his lance, he makes a deep wound, whence there come out blood and water.§

* Isa., xii. 3.

† Exod., xii. 46.

‡ Zach., xii. 10.

§ St. John, xix. 34.

With the saints, let us contemplate this wound made in the side of Jesus, and by it penetrate to the sacred heart which it discloses, and which was itself pierced by the iron.

That heart is the focus of pure love, the furnace of charity. Love was the principle of its every motion, and though it is stilled by death, it is nevertheless about to give us the most precious pledge of love ; it is going to open in order to communicate to us the treasures of grace it contains, and to shed on the earth the last drops of the blood of redemption and the water that purifies and sanctifies.

That heart, the model of charity, is likewise that of all virtues. Jesus had said : " Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart,"* thus inviting all men to study the perfections of his divine heart. Let us try, then, to enter into his views, especially at this moment when we contemplate him dead on the cross.

Let us ask ourselves, to what degree was meekness carried by the Divine Lamb slain on the altar of the great Sacrifice ? Let us reflect on the extent to which the humility of the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, has been carried :—crucified between two thieves, loaded with imprecations, degraded, insulted, scoffed, overwhelmed with all contempt, expiring at last on an infamous gibbet !

The heart of Jesus is the seat of goodness, of tenderness, of compassion. He bowed down to us to soothe and console us ; he took part in all our pains, in all our troubles. . . At sight of the crimes and the

* St. Matt., xi. 29.

indifference of men, the Divine Savior felt within his soul an immense sorrow ; he wept over Jerusalem, wept over impenitent sinners, wept over all miseries, all misfortunes.

The heart of Jesus is our asylum, our refuge, our defence : there we are beyond the reach of the thunders of the avenging God, the dreadful strokes of his justice irritated by our sins ; there the enemies of salvation may not enter : it is an impregnable fortress, at the base of which all their efforts break ; there is the “clift of the rock” where the dove is sheltered from the pursuit of the vulture.* Happy are they who, like St. Eleazar, can say : “I dwell in the wound in the side of Jesus, in his very heart ! There I take up my abode.” There my soul is in safety, and tastes the sweetest, the most desirable, peace.

O divine heart, hypostatically united to the Word, and the organ of his infinite love ! O heart worthy the homage of heaven and earth, and before which all nations shall bow down ! O heart by which our homage makes its way to God—mediating heart which conveys to the heavenly Father all our acts of love and piety !

O generous heart which is neither repelled nor discouraged by contradiction and ingratitude—heart that answered outrages only by benefits—heart that so loved as to sacrifice itself even for those who had only hatred for it !

Ah ! could one consider thee and not be transported with the desire of responding to thy love by the greatest love ? of devoting one’s self to thy worship ? of blessing

* Cant., ii. 14.

and glorifying thee ? of laboring unceasingly to increase the number of thy faithful adorers ?

APPLICATION.

Meditating on the sacred heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance, let us think of what is felt in this circumstance of the passion by the most holy heart of Mary. The soul of that tender mother was in the heart of her Son, and thus it was she who felt the iron that pierced it. At this moment is realized the prophecy of old Simeon : “Thine own soul a sword shall pierce.”*

Let us behold that divine Mother receiving the adorable blood from the heart of Jesus, adoring by it the justice of the heavenly Father which is henceforth satisfied ; blessing the infinite goodness of the Savior who has effected a superabundant redemption, and who manifests it by that effusion of blood following on the great words ; “All is consummated.”†

Let us adore the fifth wound of Jesus, and call to mind what it is for all true disciples of that adorable Savior. Let us regard it as the source of grace, the refuge of sinners, the voice that most eloquently speaks to us of the infinite goodness and love of Jesus for us.

Let us render to the divine Heart of Jesus the homage of adoration, love, and gratitude due to it. With so great a number of pious souls, let us venerate it in a very particular manner on the first Friday of every month, receiving it in holy Communion, lovingly contemplating its blessed image, meditating on its tenderness, invoking it with fervor, and applying ourselves to form our heart to its likeness.

* St. Luke, ii. 35.

† St. John xix. 30

PRAYER.

“I render thee thanks, O Jesus! for the wound thou didst receive on the cross after thy death. It was thy love that guided the soldier’s hand, and opened at the same thrust, thy side and thy sweet heart, that unfailing source of sweetness and tenderness. Blessed be that saving wound, that most holy wound; blessed be the adorable blood and the water of salvation which flowed from it to wash away our sins.

“Wash me, then, O good Jesus! in that sanctifying water—I who am a sinner;—enliven me by that precious blood, and when my soul shall depart from this world, give me, as viaticum, one drop of that divine drink. By thy pierced heart, I beseech thee, O most loving Jesus! pierce my heart with an arrow of thy love, so that it may no longer contain any earthly affection, and that it may be wholly given up to the sole and all-powerful action of thy celestial charity.”*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 408.)

* Prayer of St. Gertrude.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

THE FIVE WOUNDS.

“They have pierced my hands and my feet.”—Ps., xxi. 17.

CONSIDERATION

CHRISTIAN souls, let us go to Calvary to contemplate there the inanimate body of the divine Redeemer fastened to the cross; let us fix our eyes on those innumerable wounds which cover it from head to foot; let us fix them on that august head hanging earthwards, on that adorable face soiled, bruised, disfigured; on those motionless eyes, that mouth closed by death. . . . Let us behold that divine body, bloody, torn, and, as it were, falling to pieces; finally, let us look upon our Beloved in the state to which he has reduced himself! Yes, he is, indeed, such as the prophets saw him,* for there is no soundness remaining in his flesh; at this moment his bones are bare—they may be numbered! . . .

At this sight, how can we but be penetrated with the liveliest emotion and shed tears in torrents? Ah! let them flow, those tears of compassion, sorrow, love! Let us weep at the foot of the cross and in the presence of our God, who has been sacrificed for us; let us ever keep looking upon the sacred body fastened to that cross, and the wounds wherewith it is covered.

* Isa., i. 6; Ps., xxi. 18.

But let us consider with more particular attention the wounds in the hands and feet and the wound in the side, being those of which Jesus vouchsafed to keep the marks after his glorious resurrection, and which the Church presents more especially to our veneration.

Let us say to our divine Savior : “ Whence come these wounds that I see in thy hands, in thy feet, and in thy side ? ”—and hear him answer, by the prophet Zachary : “ With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me.”*

Let us understand, then, first of all, that these wounds are our work, and that it is we who have inflicted them when we have outraged him by our sins.

Alas ! we have committed a great number by the bad use of our feet and of our hands ; and hence it is that the feet and hands of our divine Savior were pierced with nails. In like manner, our heart was the organ of so many inordinate affections ; and on that account the heart of Jesus was pierced with the lance, and shed, with the last drops of the blood of expiation, the sacred water that is to purify us.

Let the sight of the sacred wounds of Jesus excite us, therefore, to the liveliest contrition, and inspire us with the greatest horror of sin ; let it also keep before our mind all that this adorable Redeemer suffered to save us.

And, in fact, are not the five wounds of Jesus eloquent voices reminding us of his pains, relating to us the tortures of his crucifixion, and all the torments he endured during the long hours he remained on the cross ?

* Zach., xiii. 6.

While contemplating those sacred wounds, how could we but be penetrated with love and gratitude for him whose generosity, devotedness, and infinite love they proclaim so loudly?

The five wounds are for us the motive of the most entire confidence in the divine mercy and the assistance grace; they are so many mouths pleading in our behalf of before God. By them, Jesus tells his Father that he has expiated our crimes, that he satisfied, by the shedding of his blood, for all that guilty man owed to his justice; that he can, therefore, demand pardon for them.

Oh! what consolation for us who have so much reason to be seized with fear, at thought of the power and justice of the God we have offended! Yes, we may ask and obtain our pardon: the wounds of Jesus ask and obtain it for us.

They are a secure asylum to which we are allowed to retire; where the shafts of heavenly vengeance cannot penetrate; neither can the spirit who would fain destroy us, for they are the glorious monuments of his defeat, and of the victory that Jesus gained over hell.

The Savior's wounds, through which was shed the blood of expiation, are also the channels through which the graces of salvation are poured forth and shall be poured forth upon the earth, till the end of time. Christians who contemplate them with faith, feel that there emanates from them a secret strength which disposes them to virtue, to the generous practice of mortification, to the renunciation of pleasures, to the accom-

plishment of those words of St. Paul: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world."*

Those wounds are, as it were, the ornament of the now glorious body of Jesus, an ornament of his holy humanity shining in the heaven of his divine splendor: it is their contemplation that makes the delight of the elect; from them radiates the happiness they enjoy and which shall last eternally.

Oh! how we should desire to be, like them, admitted to contemplate them! With what courage should we not dispose ourselves to the practice of the virtues that will merit that happiness for us!

For the rest, all men shall see those adorable wounds, for Jesus will show them to the whole universe at the last day, at that final moment when those words of Zachary shall be fully accomplished: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced,"† and when those of St. John in the Apocalypse shall in like manner be fulfilled: Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him."‡

APPLICATION.

In what sentiments shall we contemplate those sacred wounds, at the great day when our divine Savior will show them to the whole universe? Shall they make our happiness, or be the cause of our despair?

Ah! if we would then contemplate them with joy, we will often consider them, in this life, in sentiments of a sincere sorrow for our sins; and, if possible, keep them ever present to our mind.

* Gal., vi. 14.

† Zach., xii. 10.

‡ Apoc., i. 7.

Let us ask that grace through the intercession of Mary, and say to her with the Church :

“O may the wounds of thy dear Son,
Our contrite hearts possess alone.”*

Let us also remember that, as Christians, we ought to exhibit the life and sufferings of Jesus ; that, consequently, something in us ought to recall the wounds of him who is our head and our model : let us ask ourselves then, by what do we remind ourselves of those sacred wounds ?

Oh ! how happy we should be did we really exhibit them in ourselves by our penitential and mortified life !

Let us often place our crucifix before our eyes, and press it to our heart and our lips. Let us kiss with a lively faith and a holy respect the marks of the five wounds ; and in the effusion of the liveliest sentiments of love and confidence, let us ask, through each of them, some special grace.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! generous Redeemer, who callest me at this moment to contemplate thy five wounds, monuments of thy sufferings and thine infinite love ! behold me before thee, my heart penetrated with sorrow for my sins, and, nevertheless, full of confidence because of the satisfaction thou didst offer for me to the God whom I have offended ; hear the prayer which I address to thee at this moment when, thinking of thy holy passion, I let my soul open to the hope of being heard.

* Hymn *Stabat Mater*.

I adore the sacred wound in thy right hand ; and, by it, I beseech thee to pour thy most abundant favors on our holy Father the Pope, and on all our superiors.

I adore the sacred wound in thy left hand ; and, by it, I recommend to thee my parents, my brothers, my pupils, to whom I beseech thee to grant special graces of salvation.

I adore the sacred wound in thy right foot ; and, by it, I ask of thee the perseverance of the just, the maintenance of all Religious in the way of perfection.

I adore the sacred wound in thy left foot ; and, by it, I ask of thee, O Jesus ! the conversion of sinners and the deliverance of the souls in purgatory.

I adore the sacred wound in thy side ; and, by it, I commend to thy goodness our mother the holy Church ; by it, also, I supplicate thy mercy for myself.

O Jesus ! let me enter into thy open side, penetrate to thy divine heart, establish myself therein by a sincere love and dwell in it for ever.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 409.)

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS.

“Taking him down from the cross, they laid him in a sepulchre.”—Acts, xiii. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS, the author of life, has voluntarily suffered on the cross the most cruel death, and consummated the great mystery of our redemption; his heart has been subsequently run through with a lance, and the last drops of his divine blood have been shed on the ground, henceforth hallowed.

Christian souls, let us transport ourselves to the mountain of the great Sacrifice, to the altar whereon the Lamb that was slain remains motionless! there is Mary, the august Mother of our generous Redeemer, adoring the holy Victim and offering him up to the heavenly Father, in sentiments of the most lively sorrow and the greatest love! there are the angels forming a train of glory round the sacred body still fastened to the cross, and paying it the homage of their adoration; there are the beloved disciple and the holy women, who cannot leave the divine Crucified, sole object of their love.

Meanwhile the day is drawing to a close; the moment is coming when the body of the divine Master

must be buried, so that it may not be taken from the cross by his enemies and ignominiously cast into the grave with the two thieves.

Ah! let us not fear. No, no, that immaculate flesh shall not be confounded with the bodies of sinners; for it must know no corruption, not even by contact. God who will glorify it as much as it has been humbled, inspires Joseph of Arimathea, a just man and a secret disciple of the Savior, to go boldly to Pilate and ask him for the body of Jesus. He also inspires Nicodemus, another secret disciple, to join him in rendering the sacred duty of sepulture to the august Victim.

Let us contemplate them arriving at the cross, putting up ladders, taking down with the greatest respect the body of their Master and their God.

Oh! who could tell what passes at this moment in the soul of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary! Who could imagine her sorrow when she receives in her arms the inanimate body of her Divine Son, when she presses it to her bosom, contemplates the closed eyes, his livid lips, his pallid face, his bloody brow! . . .

O Mary, he whom thou dost clasp in thine arms is thy Son, Jesus, the fairest of the children of men: but, alas! he is no longer to be known; he is now in the state to which our sins have reduced him.

Yes, behold him as sin has made him!

O good Mother! by the sorrows thou didst feel at the foot of the cross, deign to solicit our pardon from the God we have offended; offer for our sins the Victim of salvation, who is in thine arms, and by whom alone we can hope to obtain mercy!

Having contemplated Mary weeping over the body of Jesus taken down from the cross, and having besought her to intercede for us with God, let us testify to her the part we take in her sorrows; and also like her, like St. John and the holy women, let us adore the divine body that was crucified for us.

Let us unite with the beloved disciple who presses that sacred body in his arms, rests his virginal head once again on that bosom, the sanctuary of infinite love, on which he had leaned the evening before, at supper; let us unite with Magdalen, who waters with her tears those divine feet near which she had found peace, and which she sees so horribly mangled; let us unite with all the pious persons present at the mournful ceremony of the taking down from the cross, and who are all eager to testify their respect for the sacred flesh of the Man-God, and to manifest their grief for his cruel and ignominious death.

Christian souls, let us excite in our hearts the same sentiments; let us prostrate ourselves before the inanimate body of our Redeemer, and let our eyes shed torrents of tears.

Let us also consider, in thought, the Savior's cross after the body had been taken down from it; let us pay the homage of our veneration to that precious wood.

Ah! it is no longer infamous wood, an instrument of torture; it is a glorious trophy, it is the sign of salvation; it is that victorious standard planted on the summit of Calvary, which shall become the object of the profound veneration of the faithful from age to age for evermore.

O holy cross, sacred tree, receive the homage of our respect! Although bereft of the adorable body of Jesus, thou art and shalt ever be the altar whereon is offered the Victim of our salvation; the balance wherein the weight of his divine body far outweighed the sins of the world! and on thee it was, O holy cross, that the price of our redemption was laid down and accepted! Apparently a despicable instrument, thou art in reality a terrible weapon, since by thee the prince of darkness was vanquished and his prey snatched from him.

Hail, O glorious monument of the victory of the King of kings! the scentre he shall have in his almighty hand at the last day! I prostrate myself before thee, contemplating the blood wherewith thou art reddened. Ah! at that sight I feel love and confidence reviving within my heart, and I cry out with the Church: "Hail, O cross! my only hope."*

APPLICATION.

Let us enter into the spirit of the mystery we have contemplated—we Christians, who really possess upon our altars the sacred body of our divine Savior; let us pay it the homage due to it; let us keep ourselves in its adorable presence with the most religious respect, and in the sentiments of love and sorrow wherewith the pious persons who took part in his sepulture on Calvary were penetrated.

Let us often think of the sorrows of Mary at the foot of the cross, and especially of those she experienced when she received into her arms the inanimate body of

* Hymn *Verilla Regis*.

her divine Son. Ah! through the love we have for her, let us compassionate what she suffered then, and especially deplore sin which is its cause.

Let us venerate with all our heart the holy cross on which our divine Redeemer immolated himself, and whose image is everywhere under our eyes; let us often look upon it, remembering the great mystery there accomplished; let us excite in our hearts sentiments of the most lively confidence in the grace which Jesus merited for us by his sufferings and death.

Let us kiss with the most profound, the most religious respect, the particle of the true Cross which the Church presents to our veneration; and form then interior acts of regret for our faults, and of love and gratitude to him who has loved us so far as to consent to sacrifice himself for our salvation.

PRAYER.

Yes, O Jesus! I will venerate thy cross, that sacred wood stained with thy blood—thy cross which, having become the book of Christians, speaks so eloquently to us of thy love and of thine infinite and generous charity.

But, in venerating it, I will weep, O my God! over sin which made thine immolation necessary; over sin which crucified thee, and which was also the sole cause of the sorrows that broke the heart of thy divine Mother.

I will weep, but I will also hope, because thy cross is the sign of hope. Ah! it tells me that thou hast redeemed me, that I am no longer a slave, that my chains

are broken, my shame wiped away, my freedom regained, my rights recovered; that I have become a child of God and heir of Heaven.

Ah! it tells me that even I, miserable sinner, but justified through it, am allowed to draw near thy sacred flesh, to receive thy divine body in the sentiments wherewith it was received by the holy personages who conveyed it from the cross to the sepulchre; to place it myself in my heart, as in a tomb prepared for its reception; and where it will deposit the germ of life and of resurrection that is in it.

O Mary! we conjure thee, by thy sorrows, and by the sentiments with which thou didst receive into thine arms the lifeless body of thy divine Son! obtain for us all the purity, piety, and love wherewith we ought to approach that sacred body, to the end that it may be really for us the Victim of our salvation, and that his death may give us life.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 409.)

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB.

“They laid him in a sepulchre that was hewed in stone, wherein never yet any man had been laid.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 53.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us go again to Calvary, O Christian souls ! let us go to pay the last duties to the august Victim of our redemption. Let us unite with the holy persons who are performing that sad and pious ceremony ; like them, let us show our respect for that sacred body ; or rather, like them, let us adore it, because, even in death, the plenitude of divinity therein abides.

Let us contemplate the body of Jesus taken down from the cross—placed in the arms of Mary, the Mother of sorrows—watered with the tears of the beloved disciple and Magdalene—then stretched on the ground which is reddened with his blood.

There Joseph and Nicodemus kiss it respectfully, and discover, alas ! the innumerable wounds which the blood concealed from their eyes : they embalm it with myrrh and aloes, and wrap it up in a long white veil.

Let us behold them afterwards taking in their arms that precious burden, going away from the cross, and walking towards the garden where the sepulchre, destined to receive it, has been hewn in the rock.

Oh! with what lively emotion should the sight of that mournful ceremony inspire us! Mary follows the body of her divine Son, from whom her maternal heart cannot separate; with her are the beloved disciple, Magdalen, and the other holy women, whose tears flow unceasingly.

Let us contemplate them, and behold also with the eyes of faith the angels who surround and adore the body of the Word of God—of him by whom all was made—and who now, at the close of the sixth day of the great week, has finished the work of the new creation, and is going to rest in the tomb, whence he is soon to go forth glorious.

The pious *cortége* has arrived at the sepulchre; the sacred remains of the Savior are religiously placed therein; there the persons who have assisted at the burial again prostrate themselves, profoundly adoring it and shedding floods of tears; they then retire from the cave which is closed with a great stone.

Oh! who can describe the sentiments wherewith their hearts are penetrated! How profound is their grief! how bitter their regret! . . .

O Mary, what anguish of soul is thine! But thou who wert so blessed for having believed*—is not thy grief tempered by thy hope? Yes, dry up thy tears, O desolate Mother, for thy Son is about to be restored to thee; the tomb shall not long retain his sacred remains; and in spite of the precautions of the Jews, in spite of the power of hell, his word shall be accomplished, and thou shalt soon see him again living and glorious.

* St. Luke, i. 45.

O you Christian souls who assist in thought at the sepulture of the divine Savior, at that ceremony so touching, so fit to excite in our hearts the most lively emotion, reflect on what constitutes more especially the spirit of the mystery you contemplate ; consider, above all, the motives from which our adorable Master would have his body buried and made to dwell in the tomb !

Behold some of these which first present themselves to our meditation :—

Our Lord Jesus Christ would be buried and remain in the tomb :—1st : In order to leave no doubt as to the reality of his death, and, consequently, of his resurrection. 2d : To verify the prophecy of Isaiah, saying that his sepulchre should be glorious ;* and also to accomplish what was prefigured by Joseph in prison, by Jonas in the whale's belly, by Daniel in the lion's den. 3d : To make himself in all, except sin, like unto us, and to participate in the humiliation of the tomb. 4th : To engage us to resign ourselves to that inevitable humiliation, to make it less formidable to us, to lead us even to desire it.

Let us pause a moment on this last thought :—Jesus being God, elevates, sanctifies, makes every state through which he passes even desirable to Christians, his imitators. In his train, there is no longer anything that is really humiliating ; the cross itself becomes the sign of glory ; so it is with the tomb since our divine Master deigned to descend into it. It is no longer an object of horror for Christians, but rather a place of rest, into which they enter after the warfare of this life, in the train of their august chief, and sleep there

† Isa., xi. 10.

in union with him, awaiting the great day of the resurrection.

The sepulture of our Lord Jesus Christ affords us consolation and revives our hope, as it also instructs us in a sublime manner in our duties as Christians and Religious.

“Buried with him in baptism,”* says St. Paul;—that is to say that, by that sacrament, we have made the solemn engagement to bury ourselves mystically with our divine Redeemer, in order to participate in the merits of his death and deserve to rise with him.

The Christian ought, therefore, to be dead to the world, separated from the world; he ought to be able to say: “The world is crucified to me, and I to the world;”† I am, in regard to the world, as would be a dead body already laid in the tomb; my life is hidden in God, and like the sacred body of Christ in the sepulchre, I have no connection but with God and his angels.

Happy the persons who, detached in mind and heart from the world and the things of the world, are mystically buried with Jesus Christ! their soul tastes repose in the silence of the passions, and is encouraged to perseverance by the well-founded hope of a glorious resurrection.

APPLICATION.

If it is obligatory on all Christians to be dead to the world and buried with Jesus Christ, it is much more so for us Religious, who have solemnly engaged to do so, not only in baptism, but also by following our vocation.

* Col., ii. 12.

† Gal., vi. 14.

Yes, we have bid adieu to the world ; we are exteriorly separated from it ; we have put on a habit which it considers as a shroud : but has our separation been equally interior ?

Are we really dead to the world, dead to its vanities, its pleasures, its maxims ? Is our life hidden in God with Jesus Christ ? Are we buried with our divine Savior ; that is to say, do we abide in recollection and religiously observe the silence prescribed for us ?

Supposing that all our brethren acted as we do, would our house be an image of the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ ? Would it breathe of that peace and piety which should always be met with in religious communities ?

Let us, then, enter generously from this day forth on the practice of silence and recollection ; let us keep ourselves closely united with Jesus in the sepulchre : in that union we shall find rest and hope ; and when death shall appear before us, we shall accept it with resignation and even with joy, in the thought that, by it, we shall become still more like unto our divine Head ; and that the sojourn of our body in the tomb shall terminate, like the sabbath of the great week, with the day-dawn of the glorious resurrection.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! my hope and my strength, thou hast called me by my baptism, and more especially by my vocation, to manifest in myself thy life, thy death, thy sepulture, to the end that I may one day share in thy resurrection : I bless thee for having thus remembered

me, and I will try to correspond with all thy designs in relation to me.

Yes, I wish to manifest thy death and burial ; I wish to be buried with thee, to think only of thee and what is of thee ; I wish to have no more connection with the world which I have so often renounced. But, Lord ! I am weak ; wherefore, I implore the assistance of thy grace, in order that my good will may not fail, and that, closing mine ears to the noise of the world and mine eyes to its seductive pomp, I may dwell with thee in the tomb of the religious life, so as to share one day in the glory of thy resurrection, and live with thee that life of happiness that is never to have an end.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 410.)

FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE SEPULCHRE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“His sepulchre shall be glorious.”—Isa., xi. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

THE tomb is for man a monument of the most profound humiliation: there it is that his body, stricken by death, is delivered as a prey to corruption, and soon presents but a heap of rottenness,—sad object of horror and pity.

But it is not so with the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, because his immaculate flesh is always, even after death, hypostatically united with the divinity. Hence had he said, speaking by the mouth of David: “My flesh shall rest in hope;” Thou wilt not abandon me in the tomb; “Nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption.”* He had likewise prophesied by Isaiah, that his sepulchre should be glorious.†

And this is what actually happens: it is with the sepulchre of Jesus as with his cross; from a monument of humiliation, it becomes, through him, a monument of glory which shall be honored by all generations; which nations shall dispute the honor of possessing; which the

* Ps., xv. 9, 10.

† Isa., xi. 10.

great ones and princes of the earth shall be eager to visit; and to which all nations shall come to pray to him who was buried therein.

Oh! how glorious is the sepulchre of our divine Savior which was for him only a couch whereon he rested some hours in the sleep of death, awaiting the moment of the resurrection! Therein was inclosed the true Samson, guarded by the new Philistines; and thence it was that he went forth, in the middle of the night, storming the gates of death, and passing through the midst of his terrified enemies.

Let us go, then, in spirit to that holy Sepulchre; let us honor it as the trophy of the victory of Jesus over death; and, at sight of it, let us open our hearts to hope that, Jesus being our Head, it shall be with our tomb as with his; that it shall become glorious on the day when the Lord shall raise up for life those who have been united with him on this earth;—those who, faithful to their baptismal promises, shall have been dead to the world, and buried with that divine Master,—those who, entering into the spirit of the mystery of his sepulture, shall comprehend the instructions he there gives us and endeavor to put them in practice.

Let us consider, then, what has been revealed to us of the Sepulchre of our Lord, to the end that, knowing more and more that adorable Model and all-powerful Mediator, we may comprehend what we ought to do to be like unto him, and merit to be united with him in his resurrection.

Let us remark, first, that this sepulchre belongs to Joseph of Arimathea; that Jesus thus practised poverty

in a sublime manner and to the end,—for, even in the tomb, he has not where to lay his head.*

Let us next remark that that sepulchre is not far distant from the rock of Calvary—a circumstance which makes us remember that it is by the sufferings of the cross that the calm repose of christian burial is obtained, and that he shall sleep in peace with Christ, who, by patience and mortification, shall have been crucified with him.

This sepulchre is hewn in the rock : let us learn from this that it is by hard and constant labor that we shall dispose our hearts to become the dwelling of Jesus Christ.

That sepulchre is placed in a garden : this circumstance reminds us that the faithful soul, in which Christ dwells, ought to be adorned with the flowers of exterior virtues ; that it ought to make itself remarkable by an edifying conduct, constantly give good example, and diffuse outwardly the odor of the virtues of Jesus abiding within.

That sepulchre is guarded by the enemies of Jesus : through precaution, they are placed near, so that no one may come to carry off the body enclosed therein ; but, as David had foretold,† their precautions are a snare to them, because they will only serve to render the resurrection of the divine Savior more evident.

Ah ! let us well understand, therefore, that all merely human wisdom is folly before God ; that men in vain oppose the designs of his Providence, for those designs are always accomplished, and often by the very means employed against them.

* St. Matt., viii. 20.

† Ps., xxxiv. 8.

The sepulchre in which it pleases our divine Savior to remain is a new one, where there is no corruption, nor bones of the dead; and again it is his will to be buried there in a white shroud. Ah! could he better make known to us that he only takes up his abode in a heart that is pure and free from the defilement of mortal sin?

But this is not enough: in order that Jesus may be pleased with us, he must furthermore find in us all the virtues that ought to characterize Christians, and of which we are reminded by the circumstances of his sepulture—mortification and penance symbolized by the myrrh and aloes wherewith his divine body was embalmed—exterior retreat, recalled by the sealed stone that closes up the entrance of the tomb—interior recollection, typified by the darkness and silence that reign within the monument. He must find there the virtues specially represented by the persons who assisted at his burial—the justice of Joseph of Arimathea, the generosity of Nicodemus, the penance of Mary Magdalen, the charity of St. John, the piety of the holy women:—our heart must be, as far as possible, an image of the most holy heart of Mary.

Happy are the persons who present to Jesus this train of honor! Happy the heart adorned with these virtues and these perfections! That heart is the sepulchre wherein Jesus is buried, where he dwells, where he deposits the germ of life glorious and eternal.

APPLICATION.

Very different from the Jews—who keep near the holy Sepulchre for the purpose of gainsaying Jesus—let us remain there with the desire of glorifying that divine Savior.

Let us beseech him to come and dwell in us, to take up his abode there and deposit the germ of life everlasting, which he merited for us by his sufferings and death. But let us endeavor to prepare for him a dwelling worthy of him, by advancing more and more in the practice of the Christian virtues, recalled to our mind by the circumstances of his burial.

Yes, let Jesus find in us the myrrh of mortification, the flowers of modesty, the white shroud of purity; let our heart be like the rock, solidly established in faith and charity; let it be new, or exempt from all affections other than the love of Jesus; let us by the practice of retreat and silence, close it to every report and to every spectacle from without; let our recollection be for our soul the sealed stone placed at the entrance of the sepulchre, or yet the vigilant guard who forbids access thereto.

Let us enter into these dispositions, especially when we have the happiness of going to holy Communion. Let us remember that the Eucharist is the mystic sepulchre of Jesus Christ, continuing through all ages of the Church, and in which all the faithful are called to participate. Let us go often in spirit to the Savior's sepulchre; and there let us shut ourselves up with him, close our ears to all noise coming from without, dwell

in silent contemplation, and allow our soul to be inspired with the most ineffable sentiments of regret, pity, love, and gratitude.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! thou dost permit thy sepulchre to be my refuge ; there it is that my soul delights in thy holy company, and far from all worldly noise ; there it is that it finds thee, O my beloved ! O thou who art my Lord and my God, and the source of the glorious life to which I aspire !

Amiable Redeemer ! who to make us sharers in thy sepulture, dost continue it mystically in the Holy Eucharist, and permittest me to receive thee so often into my heart ! grant, therefore, I beseech thee, that I may communicate with all the dispositions thou demandest of me, and which thou hast made known to me during this meditation, to the end that thou mayst be pleased with the sepulchre of my heart, and that thou mayst deposit therein the germ of glorious resurrection and of eternal life which is in thee.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 410.)

FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

“ You seek Jesus who was crucified: he is not here; for he is risen.”—St. Matt., xxviii. 5, 6.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS, our beloved Savior, has been crucified; we have seen him suffer every pain; we have contemplated him dead, his heart pierced with a lance; we then considered him in the arms of his holy and afflicted Mother, and, finally, in the sepulchre around which his enemies keep watch.

Oh! to what a state is the infant Church reduced at this moment! Its supreme Head is dead and buried; the apostles and other disciples, sad and discouraged, hide themselves and think of dispersing; the holy society they are called to found appears ruined, annihilated; the enemies of Jesus triumph; they boast of having put to death him whose wisdom and power excited their envy.

Nevertheless, their joy is not without uneasiness: they, in fact, remember that, asking of Jesus a prodigy in proof of his divinity, he had told them that he would accomplish what had been prefigured by the prophet Jonas,* and would rise the third day after his

* Ps., xxxiv. 8: cxi. 10.

death. Now that third day is not yet past: they are therefore afraid; hence it is that they carefully guard the sepulchre, which they have closed with a large stone and sealed with the seals of the nation.

But what can they do against the Almighty! What is the use though of that scaled stone which closes the entrance of the tomb, and of those armed people who are placed around it, if not to render more incontestable the fact, the accomplishment of which they so much dread? Their precautions are snares to themselves: "They fall into their own nets," as the prophet had foretold.

The divine body of Jesus reposes in the tomb, whilst his most holy soul, going down into Limbo, consoles the just of the Old Law, announces to them their speedy deliverance, and no doubt, gives as a sign thereof, the resurrection which he is about to effect by the power of the Word to which it is united, in returning to re-animate the sacred body from which it was separated by death.

Christian souls! let us transport ourselves in thought to the Savior's tomb, at the moment when the day of rest is drawing to an end, and that third day so anxiously expected, is about to begin; let us adore that sacred body motionless in death, wrapped in a shroud, and covered with spices, as though it had been necessary to preserve it from corruption.

But, behold! the moment has arrived. The soul of Jesus penetrates into the sepulchre; it unites with its body; it restores to it feeling, color, beauty, strength, and motion; and, resuming again the life he had quitted, he frees himself from the bonds and grave-clothes in which he is wrapped, and goes forth from the tomb

without removing the stone that closed the entrance, or breaking the seals affixed thereto.

O miracles of miracles ! O happy night during which it is wrought ! night whereof it is said that it is brighter than the day ! Jesus goes forth from the tomb, and he goes forth living and glorious ! He snatches himself from the arms of frightened death,—he breaks the ligaments wherein it binds him,—and manifests that he is truly the Son of God. Oh ! how the designs of his enemies are confounded, and the projects of hell defeated !

He who was covered with wounds, fastened to the cross, drained of blood—behold him now full of life and beauty ; his body, which resembled that of a leper, has put on eternal youth ; and it is become more luminous than the light itself. For him, the cross is changed into a sceptre—Calvary into a scene of glory—the tomb into a monument of triumph. The great fact of the resurrection is accomplished ; a new creation is effected ; the Holy Church is about to dry her tears and participate in the glory of her Divine Spouse.

Already the holy women hasten to the sepulchre, whither the apostles will also go : they see that the stone which closed its entrance is thrown down ; they draw near, and all at once an angel appears to them, and announces the great event of the Savior's resurrection : " Fear not," said he to them ; " you seek Jesus who was crucified ; he is not here ; he is risen !"

Yes, Jesus is risen ! the angels proclaim it, and every thing shows that it is so : the tomb is empty—the body that had been laid there and guarded so carefully, is no

longer there ; the grave-clothes are still there, but folded as if they had not been used. There is no trace of death ; it breathes, on the contrary, of immortality : there, hearts are renewed in hope ! there, souls are illumined with the light of faith, and depart, persuaded of the resurrection, and, consequently, of the divinity of our Lord. . . Ah ! how sweet it is for us to give way to the thoughts and feelings inspired by faith in that mystery !

Jesus is risen : he is, therefore, God ; his doctrine is, therefore, divine, his Church divine, his promises divine ; it is, therefore, true that the work of our redemption is accomplished, that the chains of our slavery are broken, that the Victim of Calvary was really the Victim of our salvation ; it is, therefore, true that sin is destroyed, that the sting of death is broken, that the hope of eternal happiness is restored to us, and that we are reconciled with heaven : that joy succeeds, therefore, to sadness and overflows all hearts !

In dying on Calvary, Jesus, as a victim, gave his life to satisfy the sentence which condemned man to death ; and in rising again, he has taken a new life which he communicates to us all, who are his children. Ah ! let us receive that life with the greatest joy and the liveliest gratitude !

Jesus is risen ; but he is our Head : we shall, then, rise again, we who are his members ; all of us may, then, say those words of Job : " I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth ; I shall see my God."* Oh ! how well this thought is calculated to console us for the necessity of

* Job, xix. 25, 26.

dying ! The tomb is for the faithful who are united with Jesus, only a place of rest where they sleep some time in death, but whence, like him and by him, they shall go forth living and glorious.

APPLICATION.

Let the firmest hope animate our hearts. Yes ! let us have confidence ; our Head has triumphed, we shall triumph with him ; the sting of death shall be broken for us, and the aurora of the glorious resurrection shall thine on our eyes.

But let us often call to mind that it was necessary that Christ should suffer, and so enter into his glory ;* and that it is by our likeness to him, we shall merit being united with him in his resurrection.

Let our souls be inspired with the greatest joy at the contemplation of Jesus risen ; let us celebrate his triumph, let us sing sacred hymns to his glory ; let us testify to him, by our eagerness in his service, and especially by our fidelity to his graces, all our gratitude for the new life he communicates to us. Let us love with our whole heart that tender Father the new Adam, who regenerates humanity, more than repairs all the evil of the first sin, and permits the Church to exclaim : “ O happy fault which procured for us such a Redeemer ! ” †

Let us beseech Jesus risen to visit our soul, to bless it, to give it peace, and help to preserve that life of grace which he communicates to it, and which is one day to become the life of heavenly glory.

* St. Luke, xxiv. 26.

† Hymn, *Exultet*.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, all-powerful conqueror, destroyer of sin, death and hell! thou who by thy resurrection dost triumph over thine enemies! thou art subdued by death only to subdue it, to destroy it, and to give us strength and courage also to triumph over it. Thou openest to us, O Lord! by this victory so complete and so glorious, the gates of eternal life which our sins had closed against us; and thou inspirest us with the liveliest sentiments of joy, hope, and love.

But since it is thou, O Jesus, who inspirest us with these sentiments! sustain them, make them lasting in us, to the end that, profiting by the new life thou givest us, we may render ourselves worthy of the eternal life which is its consummation, and which thou wilt communicate to all those who, on this earth, shall have been united in thy sufferings and in thy death.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 411.)

SIXTIETH MEDITATION.

GOOD FRIDAY.

“The just perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.”—
Isa., lvii. 1.

CONSIDERATION.

BEHOLD the day on which the great Sacrifice is accomplished, the debt of guilty humanity paid, divine justice satisfied, earth made holy, hell vanquished and chained,—the day on which we became, at the foot of the cross, children of Mary and heirs of heaven.

Oh ! what moments of that day, as well as of the night which preceded it, can the faithful contemplate, without being penetrated with the liveliest emotion and shedding abundant tears of compassion, of regret, of love, of gratitude ?

The previous night is that ever memorable one on which Jesus gave himself to us in his sacrament—on which he commenced his passion in Gethsemane by the free shedding of his blood—on which he afterwards gave himself up to his enemies, and appeared before Annas, and for the first time, before Caiaphas.

When the day dawns Jesus is in a narrow cell ; he goes forth therefrom to be brought before the great council of the Jews, which delivers him to Pilate ; Pilate sends him to Herod, who, in his turn, sends him back .

to him. For three hours, the adorable Victim is thus dragged from one tribunal to another, every where loaded with ignominy, and continually receiving the most shameful and the most revolting usage.

Then come the new interrogations of Pilate, the clamors of the Jews, the preference given to Barabbas, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the condemning to death, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion; then the three hours' agony on the cross, with all that takes place on Calvary from the moment when Jesus prays for those who crucify him till that when, uttering a great cry, he bows his head and expires; and even till that when his body, after being taken down from the cross and placed in Mary's arms, is wrapped in a winding-sheet and borne to the tomb.

No, no! there is not a moment of this day which does not present to the Christian soul a subject of the most salutary reflections. Nevertheless, let us not pause on each in particular; but, from a general point of view, consider the principal virtues of which Jesus to-day gives us the example. Adorable Master! he successively establishes his pulpit in the house of Caiaphas, in the streets of Jerusalem, in the pretorium, on Calvary; and every where he teaches charity, patience, obedience, humility, and generosity!

And first charity.—He sacrifices himself, that all may know that he loves his Father, and that he does what his Father has commanded him;* he sacrifices himself, that we may know how much he has loved us: it is his love for his Father and for us that conducts him to Calvary and fastens him to the cross.

* St. John, xiv. 31.

He had said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."* Now, this is what he has done for all of us on this day which the Church commemorates; so each of us may say with St. Paul: "Jesus loved me, and delivered himself for me."†

Yes, Jesus loved us even to the shedding of all his blood for our salvation! Ah! could we, then, hesitate still to love him and to devote ourselves unreservedly to him? Nor either could we but devote ourselves to our neighbor, whosoever he be, since our neighbor represents, in regard to us, Jesus Christ himself; and, on the other hand, that divine Savior has said: "Love one another as I have loved you."‡

During the whole course of his passion, Jesus teaches, by his example, patience and meekness. Lion of the tribe of Juda,§ wielding the very might of God, having but to will it to bring down from heaven "more than twelve legions of angels,"|| or rather, to annihilate his enemies—that very moment, he appeared only "dumb as a lamb before his shearer;"¶ he leaves all power to the empire of darkness; he wishes to be only a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity."**

His enemies exhaust their rage upon him; and he bears it without complaining, and regarding them only with looks of kindness, of tenderness, and of love!

He even teaches virtue of obedience in the most sublime manner. He renounces his own will to do the

* St. John, xv. 13.

† Gal., ii. 20.

‡ St. John, xiii. 34.

§ Apoc., v. 5.

|| St. Matt., xxvi. 53.

¶ Isa., liii. 7.

** *Ibid.*, 3.

will of his Father, and accepts the chalice that is offered to him. He fulfils exactly all that which had been written of him in the holy books, and can cry out before he dies: "All is consummated."* He has obeyed in all that was commanded him; he has obeyed all, even his executioners; he has sacrificed his rest, his honor, his life, to obedience. "He humbled himself," says St. Paul, "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."† What a model for Christians, and still more for Religious!

To what a degree that adorable Master carries the practice of humility!

Most high God! King of Kings! he debases himself, taking the form of a servant.‡ He had said by David: "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people; all they that saw me have laughed me to scorn."§ Now, in his passion, each of these sayings has its fulfilment. The Son of God co-equal with his Father, worthy the adoration of heaven and earth, he is "reputed with the wicked,"|| placed below Barabbas, abandoned to all contempt. The Holy of holies, he appears as a wretched criminal who is covered with ignominy, and delivered over to the most infamous death! . . .

And what generosity is his!

He sacrifices himself for us who were his enemies. Whilst his executioners crucify him, he prays for them to his heavenly Father. He offers up, to obtain their pardon, that cross on which he is nailed, that blood

* St. John, xix. 30.

† Phil., ii. 8.

‡ *Ibid.*, 6, 7.

§ Ps., xxi. 7, 8.

|| Isa., liii. 12.

which they cause to flow from his veins. At the very moment of his greatest pains, he forgets himself to attend to us—he gives us, from his cross, Mary for our Mother—and after he has expired, he will still shed upon us, from his open heart, the greatest treasures of his grace.

Behold, Christian souls, what a model is to-day “shewn us in the mount.”* Happy are they who make it their whole study to become like unto him!

APPLICATION.

Let us adore, from the bottom of our heart, Jesus immolating himself for us. Prostrate at the foot of his cross, let us weep over his sorrows, in union with his most holy Mother, and renew towards him our sentiments of love and gratitude. Let us give ourselves to him and for ever. Has he not purchased us at a price dear enough? How, then, could we think of withholding ourselves from him?

Let us weep over our sins, the true cause of his sufferings and death, and take the resolution to commit them no more.

Let us take from our hearts all resentments, all antipathy: to-day is the great day of God's mercies to us; why should it not be the day of pardon for all the injuries that may have been done us? When Jesus prays for his executioners, could it be that there would be Christians whose hearts would remain closed against the love of their brethren?

* Exod., xxv. 40.

“Jesus sacrificed on the tree of the cross,” says St. Bernard, “is the cause, the motive, the model of all our sacrifices.” Let us unite ourselves to him more and more, and draw from that union strength and courage to walk in his footsteps. Let us labor, by his grace, to die to ourselves, to our self-love, to our passions. He wills it so, and besides, nothing is more advantageous to us; for this mystical death produces the true life, and makes us participators in all the wealth he has acquired for us by his sufferings and death.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, Author of life, who diest to-day to save me from eternal death, deign to apply to me the merits of thine immolation! Grant that, weeping over thy sorrows and my sins, I may persevere in the closest union with thee, and so obtain the salvation thou hast merited for me! Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 61, 2d subject.)

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

HOLY SATURDAY.

“He rested on the seventh day.”—Gen., ii. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us meditate on the repose of Jesus in the sepulchre. Ah! what other subject could we choose to-day that would be more conformable to the spirit of the Church, and present more salutary instruction.

Let us go to the tomb of the divine Savior; let us enter there with sentiments of the most affectionate piety; let us consider that divine body given up for yet another day to the power of death; let us contemplate that motionless head, that pallid face, those closed eyelids, that brow bearing the print of the thorns wherewith it was crowned, those pierced hands and feet, that open side, that wounded heart; and let us recall what our adorable Redeemer suffered for our salvation.

Let us adore him in his rest, which was preceded by so much toil and patience. O Jesus! thou art that generous workman who, from the first hour to the last, bore the whole burden and heat of the day. Thou hast watered with thy sweat and thy blood the furrow thou didst dig. Thou hast closed thy career, finished thy

task. Yes, thy mission is fulfilled: divine justice is satisfied; sin expiated and repaired; the Church founded; humanity regenerated; hell vanquished; heaven opened.

Yesterday thou didst tell us from the height of thy cross: "All is consummated!"* It only remained for thee to enter into thy rest, where thou dost, nevertheless, continue still thy work of salvation, and whence thou ceaseest not to instruct us.

Jesus in the sepulchre honors his Father resting on the seventh day.† He has just finished the new creation: like his Father, he has considered the work he has accomplished, and saw that it was all good;‡ then, ceasing from his dolorous labor, he would rest on this seventh day§ of the great week,—a mysterious rest which had been prefigured, and is full of instruction for us.

The repose of Jesus on the cross or in the tomb, had been prefigured by the sleep of the first man in the terrestrial paradise. Jesus is the new Adam: scarcely is he sleeping the sleep of death when, from his open side, flow forth the blood and water which are to form the Church, his most holy Spouse, the mother of the living.

This repose of Jesus had been prefigured by the captivity of the patriarch Joseph, who passes suddenly from a prison to the steps of a throne, from chains to the height of glory, and who hears himself called the Savior of the world.

It had been prefigured by the sleep of Samson, in the city of Gaza. Jesus, the true Samson, the Mighty One,

* St. John, xix. 30.

† Gen., ii, 2.

‡ *Ibid.*, i, 31.

§ *Ibid.*, ii. 2.

the Wonderful, is in the sepulchre surrounded by guards who keep watch over him; but the moment is at hand when he shall bear away the gates of the city of death, and pass with them through the midst of his terrified enemies.

The repose of Jesus in the tomb had been prefigured by the stay of Jonas in the belly of the whale, whence that prophet was to go forth alive, in order to bear to the Ninevites the word that was to be their salvation. It had also been prefigured by the stay of Daniel in the lion's den, whence that man of wonders went forth safe and sound, to the confusion of his enemies, who are cast in and meet their death there.

Jesus rests in the sepulchre, to celebrate the last sabbath of the Mosaic law as he had celebrated, at the supper, its last Pasch. That rest is only a figure of that whereon he shall enter to-morrow by his resurrection: hence that morrow is the first day of the week which shall be henceforth the day of the Lord, the Sabbath of the new law.

Jesus rests. . . Nevertheless, he is not without acting: his body is, indeed, here motionless; but his soul is in Limbo consoling the just of the Old Law, making them taste, by his presence, the happiness they shall soon enjoy with him and through him in heaven.

Neither is he without acting in this world where, by his grace, he enlightens, strengthens, consoles his disciples,—where, by his providence, he regulates all so as to baffle the desires of his enemies, to whom their precautions shall be a snare.*

Jesus rests in death; but he is our Head,—we all rest

* Ps.. xxxiv. 8.

there with him. The sepulture is only the seventh-day rest; for Christians who, having accomplished the work for which they were placed on this earth, can at this last hour say with truth, "All is consummated:"—yes, death is for them but a sleep of hope. Like Jesus in the tomb, they are in peace, awaiting the dawn of the great day, which shall be a day of never-ending glory and happiness.

APPLICATION.

Let us adore in the sepulchre the divine body which was laid therein by the piety of Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus. Let us honor the repose of Jesus sleeping in the arms of death, awaiting the hour for breaking the chains that bind him.

There is a repose figurative of that on which he is to enter by his resurrection, and which he has merited by his toils and sufferings.

Good shepherd! he has come to us wandering sheep; he tired himself out seeking us, taking us in his arms, carrying us back to the fold . . .

Master, come down from heaven to teach us—he has every where announced his holy word, he has called all nations to him; and now he rests close by his cross, the sublime pulpit from which he gave men his last instructions.

God, his Father, rested after having finished the creation; so does our divine Savior rest to-day, after having accomplished the work of our redemption, and shed on the earth the last drop of his blood.

Let us honor his burial on Calvary by the liveliest,

the most affectionate devotion to the Eucharist which is, in fact, his mystical sepulture. Let us fix our eyes upon the holy tabernacle, and think of the treasure inclosed within it. Under the veils of the sacramental species is really the sacred body of our divine Master;—that same body that was taken down from the cross, wrapped in a white shroud and placed in the sepulchre whence it afterwards arose glorious.

Let us adore him with the deepest and most affectionate piety, and devote ourselves unreservedly to him by our love and our gratitude.

Let us think that our heart is, likewise, the sepulchre of Jesus Christ on the days when we have the happiness of receiving holy communion. Oh! let us carefully prepare it for him, to the end that he may fill it with the perfume of his divinity, and that he may plant therein and develop the germ of life eternal.

To-morrow that divine Savior is coming to us. Ah! let our soul be then, as far as possible, a fitting resting-place for him—a tabernacle resplendent with the gold of charity, and adorned with the flowers of purity, humility, and piety.

Let us honor the sepulture of Jesus Christ, by the exterior and interior retirement we ought to observe in our state. As Religious, let us remember that we have quitted the world, that we are dead to the world and buried with Jesus Christ; let us, then, place our whole delight in dwelling with that admirable Master, in keeping ourselves in his holy presence, in visiting him in his sacrament, in living with him and for him.

Happy are they who observe this conduct! united

with Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead,* and the Author of life, they apply to themselves the fruits of sanctifying redemption, they accomplish works sanctifying and meritorious for eternity ; and when the day shall come that will end their labors here below, they shall sleep in peace the death of the just—resting in the hope of living again for glory, at the great day of the general resurrection.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! divine Host immolated for us on the cross, and inclosed within our holy tabernacles, I honor, in union with thy most holy Mother, thy death and burial, and I beseech thee to apply to me the merits thereof!

Grant, by thy grace, that, dying to the world and my passions, to live only by thee, with thee, and for thee, I may render myself worthy to rise in glory, and to go to celebrate in heaven, with the angels and saints, thy triumph over death and hell!

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 62, 2d subject.)

* Col., i. 18.

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

MAY 3rd.—FINDING OF THE HOLY CROSS.

“Blessed is the wood by which justice cometh.”—
Wisd., xiv. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us call to mind the event which the Church commemorates to-day, and which is so consoling to the piety of the faithful.

St. Helena, visiting the places consecrated by the presence of Jesus Christ in his mortal life, orders search to be made for the True Cross and the other instruments of the passion. Excavations are made on Calvary, and the Savior's Cross is discovered, as also those of the thieves who were put to death with him. By a striking miracle it is soon distinguished from the latter, and becomes the object of the veneration which was its due.

Let us lovingly pay it that homage so efficacious in fruits of sanctification; and to dispose ourselves for embracing the practice thereof, let us regard it under the different aspects which it presents to our faith.

The cross of Jesus Christ is the sacred altar whereon was immolated the adorable Victim of our salvation; whereon was consummated the bloody sacrifice which satisfied divine justice for us, and reconciled us with heaven.

It was on this wood that the Lamb, immolated from the beginning in intention and figure, was in reality sacrificed in the lapse of time ; it was on this wood that the divine Redeemer suffered every torment and all manner of ignominy, and through his torn veins poured forth all his blood ; it was on this wood that he slept the sleep of death, during which he opened to us, by a soldier's lance, his side and his heart, in order to pour forth upon us, with the last drop of his blood, all the treasures of his tenderness. Setting out from the moment of his immolation, we are no longer children of wrath : sin is destroyed, hell is vanquished, peace is restored, heaven is opened to us.

Let us remember then, at sight of the cross, the work that was accomplished on that tree of Salvation, and bless the God of love who was made a Victim for us. Oh ! how that divine Savior has loved us ! All proclaims it ; but particularly his cross. Yes, that sacred wood is the most expressive monument of his love for us !

Whosoever truly loves shows it by his devotion to those he loves, by the sacrifice of his interest to theirs, and, if need be, by the sacrifice of his life. This is the last effort of love : for, says Jesus Christ, " Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*

Now, of what does the cross remind us, if not of the most absolute devotion of the Son of God to our interests, the sacrifice he made for us, and even of his life, to save us from eternal death ?

* St. John, xv. 13.

The cross, which speaks to us so eloquently of the love of Jesus Christ for men, makes known to us also, in the most admirable manner, what it most imports us to know and to practise. It is a sublime pulpit from which the most precious teachings come down to us.

The cross makes us think of the goodness of God to us, and recalls those words of the Savior: "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son"* for the salvation of the world. It instructs us even as to the value of our soul, the enormity of sin, the rigors of divine justice; and teaches us to die to ourselves to live the life of the divine Crucified.

The cross loudly proclaims the great precept of the forgiveness of injuries, of the love of our enemies, of the charity that ought to animate the faithful.

And how is it possible to turn one's eyes on that wood, without immediately recalling those maxims of the divine Master: "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, pray for those who persecute you;"† and "love one another, as I have loved you!"‡

Yes, from the cross go forth teachings the most sublime and the most salutary. Hence it is the book of the elect, that which was read with so much delight by St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisium, St. Bonaventure, or rather, by all the saints; for all have said, by their conduct, what was said by St. Francis de Sales: "It is good for us to be with the cross. Here it is that I will watch, that I will read, that I will meditate, having that divine book constantly before my eyes and my thoughts, to study therein the science of salvation."

* St. John, iii. 16. † St. Matt., v. 44. ‡ St. John, xiii. 34.

The saints contemplated the crucifix with faith, and by that contemplation their heart was inflamed with charity, and their mind enlightened with the brightest and purest rays; so it would be with us if we considered ourselves with the same interior dispositions.

The Savior's cross is the channel of grace. Placed between heaven and earth, it is the ladder by which our prayers ascend to God, and the effects of his mercy come down upon us.

The sight of the brazen serpent cured the bite of the fiery serpent: so does the contemplation of Jesus crucified heal our spiritual maladies. How many desolate, discouraged souls have found at the foot of the cross consolation, hope, and grace to accomplish the greatest, the most heroic, sacrifices! . . . How many sinners, kneeling before the cross, have been purified by the divine blood which fell from it upon them!

The image of the cross is, as it were, constantly before our eyes in our houses; we even carry it about us; we make it on our forehead, on our mouth, on our breast; we are, so to say, identified with it; it will be placed in our hands at our last hour, it will be put to our dying lips, and it is before it that we shall breathe our last. After our death, it will be placed on our body, then over our grave, and thus we shall rest in its shadow, awaiting the day of the resurrection.

Revolving these thoughts in our mind, let us, then, say: "Hail, O Cross, my only hope!"*—pedestal from which my soul shall ascend to heaven; warrant of my justification, by which I shall obtain mercy from the

* Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

Supreme Judge ; tree which repairs the evil committed at the foot of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil ; balance in which the Savior's merits outweigh our iniquities, and entitle us to eternal felicity !

APPLICATION.

Let us render to the Savior's Cross, in union with the Church, the homage of profound veneration : let us salute its holy image with respect ; let us honor it wherever we meet it ; let us form our pupils to pay it the homage due to it ; let us piously kiss our crucifix ; let us contemplate with the sweetest emotion that sacred object, which recalls to our heart so many precious memories ; let us raise our mind and our heart, as it were, unceasingly to Jesus immolating himself for us.

Let us honor the spiritual cross that is our own : let us conduct ourselves, in the troubles and afflictions of life, as true disciples of the Savior should.

Let us accept our cross with resignation, thinking that it comes to us on the part of God—of that tender Father who tries us only because he loves us, and who desires our happiness more than we ourselves do.

Let us bear it with patience, through love for Jesus, and with a view to imitate him. Oh ! if we truly loved that sweet Savior, how we would appreciate the cross ! how fond we would be of it ! how we would bless it for giving us that conformity with him !

Moreover, what is our cross to his ? For us he drained to the dregs the chalice of all humiliation and of all sorrow : could we, then, refuse to take some drops of it for his sake, and to apply his merits to ourselves ?

As disciples of Jesus Christ, let us imitate our Master ; let us attach ourselves to the cross with him, and there remain. Let us be resigned, and even content and joyous, in imitation of the saints, saying with St. Teresa : "To suffer, or die ;" or with St. Francis Xavier : " Yet more ! O Lord !"

Let us offer to God our sufferings, with a view to adore him, to expiate our sins, to draw down his graces, remembering that on the cross we are in the best situation for making our prayer reach his heart.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! adorable Redeemer ! who, by thy cross, didst redeem the world, grant that I may suitably honor that sacred wood. Grant, I beseech thee, that imitating thee in thy sufferings, I may place myself on the cross with thee, and that I may remain thereon till the day when by it I shall attain to thine eternal glory.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 120, 2d subject.)

SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

FIRST SUNDAY OF JULY.—THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

“Lord, thou hast redeemed us in thy blood.”—Apoc., v. 9.

CONSIDERATION.

“WE venerate the precious blood which Jesus, dying on the cross, shed for us by so many and such cruel wounds:” thus it is that the Church, in her office, informs us of the object of this feast. “Let this day,” she adds, “be a memorial for you, and let it be celebrated in all generations.”*

This day is, in fact, the memorial of the shedding of the divine blood whereby we have been redeemed, a figurative and prophetic effusion, commenced, accomplished, yet mystically continued, and unceasingly producing its salutary effects.

At that moment when the Son of God offered himself to his Father, saying: “Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require; then said I, ‘Behold I come,’”†—he pledged himself to shed his blood for the expiation of our sins, and by his dispositions, he shed it in one sense, for the apostle St. John calls him, “the Lamb which was slain from the beginning.”‡

As a memorial of that engagement, and to prefigure

* Office of the Precious Blood.

† Ps., xxxix. 7, 8.

‡ Apoc., xiii. 8.

the object thereof, God willed that animals should be every where immolated, and that blood should flow on the altars, under the knives of the priests of his holy religion. He prescribed sacrifices that were symbols of that which was to be accomplished on Calvary. He thus had announced beforehand the bloody immolation whereof Jesus Christ was to be the Priest and the Victim. Let us also recall what he prescribed in relation to the Paschal lamb, and especially those words: "The blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be."*

The prophets spoke of the shedding of the divine Blood:—"Who is this," says Isaiah, "that cometh from Edom with dyed garments? Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press?"†

The prophet Zachary, speaking to the Lord, says: "Thou, 'also, by the blood of thy Testament hast sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit."‡

When the time is accomplished, the Son of God made man fulfils his engagement, realizes what had been pre-figured, and what he had foretold of himself. Scarce has he appeared amongst men, when he yields the first fruits of his blood under the knife of Circumcision, and binds himself anew to shed the whole of it.

When about to deliver himself to his enemies, he, under the sacramental species, gives his blood to his Apostles seated at table with him, and tells them, while presenting to them the chalice he has consecrated: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New

* Exod., xii. 13.

† Isa., lxiii. 1, 2.

‡ Zach., ix. 11.

Testament which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins.”*

He then repairs to the garden of Olives, and there, falling into an agony, he sweats, as it were, drops of blood which penetrate his clothes and fall even to the ground. Thus it is that the Pontiff of the New Law enters into the sanctuary, not, like the high priest with the blood of goats or calves, but with his own blood.†

Soon does Judas deliver up the innocent blood which he has sold for thirty pieces; Jesus is in the power of the Jews who, in their turn, deliver him to Pilate. In the pretorium, the divine Victim sheds his blood under the blows of the scourging, and by the wounds made by the crown of thorns.

Let us accompany him ascending Calvary: we can follow him by the marks of his blood, which falls to the ground and is contemptuously trampled under foot by the deicidal populace.

Let us arrive with him on the summit of the mountain.

Ah! here is the place of the bloody sacrifice. The holy Victim is stretched on the altar; the veins of his hands and feet are broken by horrible blows, and the divine blood flows out and reddens the hands and feet of the executioners. . . .

The cross is then raised, and the blood of Jesus continues to pour forth: it reddens the wood of the cross, and flows, first in waves, then in a lesser quantity, then drop by drop; and it falls before the eyes of Mary!—O tender Mother! what anguish wrings thy heart at sight

* St. Matt., xxvi. 27, 28.

† Heb., ix. 12.

of the shedding of that blood formed of thy blood!—But here human language fails; no words could describe the feelings of the Savior's most Blessed Mother! . . .

Finally, let us behold the soldier who, with the thrust of a lance, pierces the side and the heart of Jesus, and by that wound draws forth the last drop of the Redeemer's blood.

The divine blood that was shed on Calvary still flows in a mystic manner on our altars, where it really and substantially is. Everywhere, and without interruption, it is present to the eyes of the heavenly Father, and produces the same effects! O! how admirable and how salutary are those effects! but here let us allow the saints and the Church to speak:—

“The blood of Christ,” says St. Paul, “will cleanse our conscience.”* We find in Jesus Christ, by his blood, the remission of sins which makes redemption.† “And to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than Abel.”‡ “Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”§

The Apostle St John says: “Jesus hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”|| The Saints overcame the dragon “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”¶

“The blood of Jesus Christ,” says St. Chrysostom, “drives the devils away from us, and draws down upon us the Angels and the Lord of Angels. The destroying Angel entered not where the blood of the paschal Lamb was imprinted: what, then, can the angel of darkness

* Heb., ix. 14.

† Col., i. 20.

‡ Heb., xii. 24.

§ Rom., v. 9.

|| Apoc., i. 5.

¶ *Ibid.*, xii. 11.

do to those who are marked with the blood of the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world?"

"That blood which thou didst shed, O wretched demon!" says St. Augustine, "has vanquished thee, and ransomed me. Having drank of it, I fear no more the malice of thy venom."

"O blood of Jesus Christ!" exclaims St. Bernard, "thou art on the altar a drink, on the cross our ransom, in heaven our defence with God."

"Mankind," says holy Church, "expected but a dread misfortune, the fruit of the first Adam's crime; but the new Adam, by his innocence and his love, has restored us to life. By his blood he has purchased for us an eternal redemption. The Father, disarmed, can no longer refuse pardon: and whosoever washes his defilement in that divine blood, acquires a splendor, a beauty, like unto that of the angels and fit to please the King of kings.*

APPLICATION.

While entertaining ourselves with these holy and salutary thoughts, let us adore the divine Blood shed for our salvation; let us pay it the homage of the most profound veneration, in union with Mary adoring it on Calvary.

Let us weep over our sins which rendered its effusion necessary. Let us remember that it is on account of our iniquities Jesus Christ was crucified, and shed all his blood.

Let us love our generous Redeemer; let us bless him for having made himself a victim in our place. "We

* Office of the Precious Blood.

venerate the precious blood he shed for our salvation : ah ! shall we refuse to mingle with it, at least, tears of gratitude ? ”*

Let us pray, in all confidence, to God the Father, for, through the blood of Jesus Christ, we have all access to his heart—the blood of the new Abel ascends to heaven, but it is to demand mercy. Let us unite with its voice that of our prayer, and we may be sure that we shall be heard.

Let us prepare well for holy Communion. Let us reflect that the blood of Jesus Christ is therein given us as the food of our souls. Let us receive it with a heart pure and full of fervor, to the end that, in our regard, the saying of the divine Master may be accomplished : “ He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day ; ” † and that, admitted into his glory, we may say to him with the saints : “ Lord, thou hast redeemed us in thy blood, and hast made us to our God a kingdom.” ‡

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! deign, we beseech thee, to assist thy servants whom thou hast redeemed by thy precious blood. § “ And thou, O almighty Father ! be propitious unto us. Thou hast redeemed us by the blood of thine only Son ; thou wilt reign with us by the grace of the holy Spirit : vouchsafe to complete thy gifts by crowning us in heaven.”

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 128.)

* Office of the Precious Blood.

† St. John, vi. 55.

‡ Apoc., v. 9, 10.

§ Hymn. *Te Deum*.

SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

SEPTEMBER 14th.—EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS.

“God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Gal., vi. 14.

CONSIDERATION.

THE cross, before the death of Jesus Christ, was an instrument of sorrow and of shame, an infamous gibbet the sight of which was horrifying: there was nothing more vile, nothing more contemptible.

And now it is the object of the greatest veneration. People everywhere celebrate its grandeur, singing with the Church: “The standard of the Eternal Monarch is displayed. On this wood, the Author of life received death, and by his death gave us life. O precious tree! resplendent with glory, chosen to touch the sacred members of the Savior and stained with his adorable blood.”* “O cross more brilliant than all the stars, celebrated throughout all the earth, worthy of all honor from men, holier than all that is holy, and alone worthy of bearing the world’s ransom! O amiable wood that didst receive a burden so precious, save that people assembled on this day to sing thy praises!”†

* Hymn, *Veilla Regis*.

† Office of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

It is become the most glorious banner, the very sign of honor. It is revered more than it was despised: how many diadems make it their principal ornament! What homage has been, and still is rendered to it! Let us call to mind the veneration in which it was held by the Emperor Heraclius, the memory of which the Church celebrates by the feast of this day.

But why is its destiny so changed? It is that the Son of God touched it with his hands, carried it on his shoulder, suffered upon it his last pains, stained it with his blood. Yes, from that day forth it has had every title to the veneration of men and angels.

The Cross is the altar of the great sacrifice that was offered up for the reconciliation of man with God; on it was immolated the divine Lamb, whose death is our redemption and our life: on it he who is at once Priest and Victim, shed his blood for the glory of God his Father and the remission of our sins.

The Cross is the wood by which justice cometh,* and which the prophet had announced; it is the balance wherein the divine body, which is the world's ransom, abundantly outweighed the spoils of hell.†

The Cross is the tree that repaired all the ills which sprang from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Near the latter, man was made the slave of pride, of covetousness, of sensuality, and found death; near the former, he immolates the triple concupiscence, and recovers life.

The Cross is the triumphal chariot of the Divine Savior; it was on it that he vanquished the devil, that

* Wisd., xiv. 7.

† Hymn, *Varilla Regis*.

he destroyed the empire of darkness. Hence does the Church say: "Publish amongst the nations that the Lord triumphs by the wood."* "Behold the cross of the Lord: fly, hostile bands!"†

The Cross is the beacon pointing out to those who sail on the sea of this world, him who is the true light. The Cross is the throne of the new Solomon, whence he rules over all the earth, and teaches nations true wisdom.

Jesus Christ humbled himself, and on that account his Father exalted him;‡ He gave him all nations as an inheritance;§ He made him King over all things.|| Now, it is on the cross that he exercises his dominion; "He rules by the wood,"¶ says the Church, recalling the words of David.

The Cross is the standard of the Supreme Monarch, planted in sight of all men, around which the elect range themselves;—the standard that shall see all others fall before it, that shall stand alone over the ruins of the world, and shall be seen by all the generations of men radiant in the heavens. It is the sign of the Son of Man,** which shall appear at the last day, and fill the wicked with terror, whilst it shall be the consolation, the joy, the felicity of the just.

The Cross, says St. Augustine, is not only the sacred altar on which Jesus was immolated; it is the pulpit from which that Divine Master instructs us. Thence he preaches to us, in the most eloquent manner,

* Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*. † Office of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. ‡ Phil., ii. 8. § Ps., ii. 8. || *Ibid.*, 9.
¶ Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*. ** St. Matt., xxiv. 30.

humility, meekness, patience, pardon of enemies, self-denial, devotion, constancy, or rather all the virtues, for on the cross he practises them all in their most sublime perfection; and thence he tells us: "You call me Master and Lord; for I have given you an example,"*—will you refuse to follow it, you who are my disciples?

"From the cross," says St. Leo, "the Savior rebukes the effeminacy of worldlings by his sufferings; their inordinate love of riches, by his destitution; their pomp and their pride, by his humility." Thence he beatifies poverty, humiliations, tears; he is there the pattern shown us on the mountain,† and to which we must be conformable.

Happy are they who hear and practise these divine lessons, and who can say with the Apostle: "I glory only in the cross of Jesus Christ, and him crucified."‡

The Cross is the intermediary between heaven and earth: by it the divine mercy comes to us; by it we go to God; Jesus on the cross draws souls to himself and raises them to his Father, according as he had said of himself: "When I shall be lifted up from earth, I will draw all things to myself."§

The Cross is the monument of the love of Jesus for men: what testimony does it not give of his charity! It tells us that he loved us so as to "be made a curse for us,"|| to suffer every pain, to shed all his blood, and to give his life for our salvation. It tells us that his love was stronger than death; that when his heart had

* St. John, xiii. 13, 15. † Exod., xxv. 40. ‡ Gal., vi. 14.

§ St. John, xii. 32. || Gal., iii. 13.

ceased to beat, he was still consumed with love for us, and gave us the pledge thereof, by opening to pour out the last drops of the blood of redemption.

The Cross is the symbol of our belief, the distinctive sign of Christians, the foundation of our hope, the fuel of the fire of charity, the source of the greatest good.

We must then bless, exalt, glorify it, and make known to men that admirable invention of God.

APPLICATION.

Let us render to the cross the worship due to it. Let us salute it with respect. Let us contribute, as we should in our employment, to make it honored and respected.

Let us make the sign of the cross with faith and devotion: let us arm ourselves with it in temptation, remembering that it is by this sign we conquer the enemy of our salvation.

Let us carry the crucifix religiously about us. After the example of the saints, let us press it to our hearts, kiss it with affection, contemplate it with piety, meditate on the facts it recalls to us, and therewith nourish our mind and our heart.

Let us renew ourselves in love and gratitude to Jesus Christ. The cross tells us how he has loved us: should it not tell us how we ought to love him, and what should be our devotion to his glory?

Let us beg of Jesus crucified the grace of exalting his holy cross by love and esteem for the spiritual cross he has destined for us. Let us think that the latter—how repugnant soever its aspect may be to our

nature—is a present from the divine goodness, a testimonial of the love of Jesus for us, the way by which he wishes to conduct us to heaven.

Let us accept it, therefore, with resignation, and say, in union with all the saints : “ O Cross, thou art my hope, my consolation, my joy ! Be my bed of rest : it is in thine arms that I wish to live and die ! ”

PRAYER.

Divine Savior ! who callest me to imitate thee, and who wouldst render me a participator in the glory thou hast acquired for thyself by thy labors and thy sufferings, grant me the grace of patience in the troubles and adversities of life ! Grant that, contemplating thee on the cross, I may place myself there with thee, and so remain till the day when the cross shall give me admission to thine eternal kingdom.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 142, 2d subject.)

THE END.

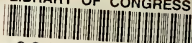


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